

Another Great Story commenced this week, by Oll Coomes, who writes exclusively for the Saturday Journal.

NEW YORK Saturday Journal A POPULAR PAPER PUBLISHED WEEKLY RICKS & PROFFER

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1872, by BEADLE AND ADAMS, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

Vol. III.

E. F. Beadle,
William Adams,
David Adams,
PUBLISHERS.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 4, 1873.

TERMS IN ADVANCE (One copy, four months, \$1.00
One copy, one year, 3.00.
Two copies, one year, 5.00.)

No. 147.



His eyes fell upon something that started from out the gloom toward him—something that sent the blood in icy currents through his veins.

OLD SOLITARY, The Hermit Trapper; OR, THE DRAGON OF SILVER LAKE.

BY OLL COOMES,

Author of "Hawkeye Harry," "Boy Spy," "Ironsides, the Scout," "Death-Notch, the Destroyer," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A NIGHT OF ADVENTURE.

It was a wintry day in the year 1846. The brow of the heavens was moody and sullen.

Great volumes of dark, gray clouds lay piled in jumbled masses against the northern sky, and from these, fleecy shreds detached themselves and went trooping across the heavens, trailing their tattered and torn fragments in wild confusion through the air. A damp, chilly wind swept across the plain, and rushed threateningly through the brown valleys and forest aisles, moaning bitter stories of a coming storm to the wild-wood monarchs that stood writhing and shivering in its breath.

Beneath that continent of clouds, the great prairie of the north-west lay, apparently tenantless in its murky gloom, its hills and valleys, its meandering streams and leafless motes of timber, fading away into one dissolving view—that mysterious ocean of darkness—the boundary of the vision. A broad waste of undulating prairie, stretching its unbroken length between the English river and Silver Lake, in the then territory of Iowa, lay in all the fullness of

its autumnal grandeur and desolation, ready to receive the winter's offering that was gathering in the clouds above. It was a plain, whose continuation of gentle swells, or prairie waves, was unbroken inside of weary leagues, traveling westward from the English river.

But, despite the solitude and the threatening character of the approaching storm, life was abroad on that plain. Hoofed feet were pressing its soil and going in a westerly course in obedience to the guiding hand of a master.

It was a solitary horseman who was making his way across that plain, in the face of the gathering snow-storm. He was well bundled from the biting winds, in a wolf-skin coat, buffalo over-shoes and a fur cap. The latter was drawn down over his ears, meeting almost with the upturned collar of his great-coat, and nearly concealing his face. A red woolen scarf encircled his neck, and its ends crossing on his breast, passed under the arms and were tied behind his back.

The animal he bestrode showed signs of exhaustion from long travel and the burden it bore. For, in addition to its rider, there were several large packs strapped to the

saddle behind, while each side of the front bow was loaded to its utmost capacity.

Whither this solitary man was journeying was mystery to all but himself, for the country to the westward, as far as the Missouri river, was the undisputed hunting-grounds of the various tribes of Indians that dwelt to the northward, and who regarded the pale-face intruders with hostile jealousy. His presence there might have been a strong argument in favor of his being in league with the Indians, had it not been for one thing, of which the stranger was evidently unconscious.

Far back upon his trail, and yet within sight of him, an Indian warrior was dogging his footsteps. He was on foot, yet he managed to maintain the same distance between the horseman and himself that he had gained hours before.

But not conscious of the spy upon his track, the rider pursued his lonely course, occasionally consulting a small pocket-compass to direct his bearings.

Now and then he scanned the clouded sky. He saw the dark gray clouds trooping across the heavens, and with an eager impatience he would apply the whip and rowel to his jaded beast, as if anxious to reach

some point of safety and shelter before the storm came on.

As he rode on, he at length noticed that it was growing darker and darker around him, and unpleasant apprehensions filled his mind. Night was near, yet he was far from the least cover that could afford him shelter.

He certainly had underestimated the distance required to complete that day's journey to reach the timber that bordered the western extremity of the plain.

A sense of fear was stealing over him. He was fully satisfied that the night would be one of extreme darkness; and what, with a blinding snow-storm beating around him, could he do upon that prairie?

He pressed on with all the speed that his jaded animal could muster. There was still a faint hope in his breast that he might run across a motte of timber, one of those oases that intersperse these great prairie stretches.

As he journeyed on, he suddenly found these hopes realized to a certain degree, when he found himself in the midst of a sparse growth of burr-oak "grubs," as they are termed in western phraseology. These are small bushes, most of which were not over five feet high, and numbering about

one to every square rod of ground. In the gathering twilight they presented a dense form, so thick and close were the stunted and stubby boughs upon them. Yet this sparse growth of "timber" held forth no inviting inducements as a point of shelter. At first he entertained a belief that it was the outskirts of a dense body of timber, but he found on riding on a ways that it soon terminated in the open prairie again. So, riding back among the burr-oaks, he dismounted with the determination of going into camp, for upon examination he had found that many of the oaks were dead—having been killed by the annual fires that sweep the prairies—and being perfectly dry, would answer the purpose of fuel.

Stripping his animal, he tethered it with a lariat, so that it could crop the grass, which, though dry and brown, was readily eaten by the hungry, jaded beast.

From one of his bundles the traveler now took a roll of canvas, with which he proceeded to erect a tent. This he did in a speedy and novel manner: with a hatchet he trimmed all the branches from one of the oaks, leaving nothing but the body standing. This was to be used as the central pole, and having fastened the canvas around it at the proper distance from the ground, he stretched it out at the lower sides until it resembled a small cone, and fastened its edges down with slender iron pins, driven into the ground. A small opening in one side served as the door, which was covered with a loose "flap" when closed for the night.

His tent completed, the traveler placed all his effects within it, then gathered from the surrounding bushes a goodly quantity of fuel, which he also deposited in his tent.

Before striking a fire, he reconnoitered his situation, for he could not convince himself that he was entirely free from danger. He found that the wind had suddenly changed from the north-west to the north-east—a freak very common in this high latitude—and now it brought to his ears a sound like the dashing of breakers upon a rocky shore. But the sound was very faint and was driven from his thoughts by a grand spectacle that was revealed before him.

A white curtain seemed to extend from amid the clouds to the earth, resembling a mighty sail crowded to its utmost, at times belying almost to the earth.

It required but a single glance to tell the traveler that it was a blinding cloud of snow sweeping across the plain. He could already feel the fine particles upon his hands and face, and he had barely time to enter his tent and fasten down the door-flap when the sharp click of the snow-flakes upon the canvas told that the storm was upon him.

He glanced out through a small rent to see how his horse was taking the driving storm, but the air was so densely filled, with the flying seed as to render it totally impossible to distinguish an object a rod away.

Turning about, he proceeded to strike a fire. He arranged some of the fuel, already procured, in the center of the lodge. Then he took from an inner pocket a match, which he struck and applied to the pile.

A dull, blue light pervaded the gloom of the place, but, as the flames gathered strength, they shot their bright, ruddy rays into every corner of the lodge, and their warm, cheerful glow was felt in every fiber of the wanderer's frame. He removed his scarf, cap and great-coat, and laid them aside. His form and features were now more fully revealed in the ruddy glow of the fire.

He was a man not over eight and twenty years of age, and his features wore that bright, intelligent expression so characteristic of mental and social culture. His hair and beard were almost black, the latter, however, being of but a few weeks' growth. His eyes were black, sharp and brilliant, but their lids wore a heavy, languid expression that was not natural, but was rather the result of fatigue, watching, and the want of sleep.

And now, as the stranger sat gazing reflectively into the cheerful fire before him, he would fall into a daze from which he would start at every wail of the wind without, and stare about him with that wild, terrified look that marks the fear of one who can hear in every noise, however slight, the subdued voice of a detective, the click of a revolver, or the stealthy clasp of handcuffs.

But surely that handsome stranger had no such fears. He surely was not a fugitive from the officers of justice, for his was not the face of a criminal. But why did he start, and manifest such restlessness of spirit and uneasiness of mind?

As the moments wore on, he finally shook off his emotions of fear and uneasiness, and drawing from among his effects a pair of saddle-bags, he took therefrom some provisions, with which he proceeded to feast his gnawing hunger.

After his repast had been concluded, he produced a pipe, and for the next hour gave himself up entirely to its companionship.

And all this time the snow was falling. He could hear its continuous click upon the sides of his tent, and in several places it was drifting into the lodge under the edge of the canvas.

CHAPTER II.

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD.

Night had long since set in, and the

gloom and storm were fearful. It was not so very cold, but the snow was damp and heavy, and driving and whirling in every direction in dense clouds.

The wayfarer kept close by his fire, for a single glance out into the night and storm would send a chill through his frame. But at length the storm began to subside. The wind went down and the snow ceased to fall. Finally the moon, which was in the zenith, burst through the trembling clouds and flooded the plain with its mellow radiance, almost rivaling the light of day.

The man arose, and opening the door of his tent, went out. A scene of dazzling brightness and glory met his eyes. The whole plain lay wrapt in a spotless robe of white, to which the moonbeams gave a luster of blinding splendor. So sudden had been the change in the weather, and the appearance of the plain, that the traveler felt that he had been suddenly wafted into a new clime. Not a breath of wind was stirring, and although the air was crisp and bracing, it was not biting cold.

But it was not the plain, nor the dazzling beauty reflected from its mantle of snow, that held our friend—if such we may call him—entranced, but the pillars of snow that stood around him. Every burr-oak bush within sight of him was laden with snow. Not a limb of shrub could be seen, but each shrouded bush looked like a heath shaft of marble, though there was a mystic grandeur about it, with which none but the hand of nature could embellish it.

None of these spotless columns were less than five feet high, and some reached to the height of ten feet. And while our friend stood within the silent forest of statuary, regarding each shaft with its bright, frosty sparkle, his eyes caught sight of a beautiful arch of snow, a few paces away, that set at defiance all the beauties of the dazzling white columns. But no sooner had he discovered it, than all the beauty faded from what seemed a wonderful freak of the storm, for he at once became cognizant of the fact that his horse was the support of that arch, being too tired and travel-worn to shake the icy cover from his back.

Advancing, the master soon brushed the snow from the animal's back and body; then, with his feet he scraped the snow away from around the bush so that the animal could lie upon the grass.

This act of kindness done, the man returned to his tent. He found his fire had burned low, and at once replenished it with fuel. He now began to think of lying down to get a few hours' sleep, the want of which was beginning to tell upon him.

It required but a moment to prepare a couch by spreading his great-coat and a woolen blanket upon the ground, reserving a couple of blankets for covering.

These preparations completed, he was about to remove his boots when his ears caught a slight sound without.

He bent his head in the attitude of intense listening. He heard his horse pawing the ground with a quick impatience. This, however, he accorded to its dislike of the crunching snow under its feet, and would have thought no more about it, had he not heard the beast give a loud snort.

This convinced him that all was not right, and, rising, he went out to see what was wrong. He saw his horse standing, with head erect, ears pricked up and nostrils dilated, as if with fright.

Quickly the traveler swept the surrounding prairie, but nowhere upon its white bosom could he see a single object, save the shadows cast by those frail pillars of snow. Still he knew the animal sensed danger, but, as nothing was visible, he argued with himself that a hungry wolf must have been skulking thereabouts and frightened the horse. With this conviction fully impressed upon his mind, he again sought the cover of his tent and the cheery glow of his fire, only to be called out again, and that immediately, by another and more violent manifestation of fright by his horse.

He was fully satisfied that something was wrong, and he now made a more careful observation of his surroundings. Still he could see nothing but those ghostly shafts and their shadows. One of these columns, however, attracted more than usual attention from the traveler, for it suddenly occurred to him that it was closer to him than when he made his previous observation, and yet he was standing on the very same spot. This seemed not a little singular, but the absurdity of the idea of its really being nearer to him, induced him to believe it was only imagination. And, without giving the column a second glance, he turned and carefully swept the plain around him.

But, despite his efforts to the contrary, his gaze was drawn back to that pillar of snow by some strange magnetism, and when his eyes rested upon it again, he started with an inward shudder of mysterious terror, for he actually saw the column moving!

A fearful realization rushed suddenly across his mind, and to divert his suspicion he bent his gaze in another direction. Just then a solitary cloud, flitted across the moon's disk, and trailed its shadow across one of the more distant columns of snow, but, instead of the shadow moving, it seemed to stand still, while the column appeared to be moving toward him. This he knew was not the case, but rather the power of imagery, and again the traveler reasoned with himself that it was upon the same principle that the other column had seemed to move. In order to leave no doubt, whatever, he resolved to advance and knock the snow from the brush that supported it.

It required but a few steps to carry him within reach of it, and then, with his booted foot, he gave the column of snow a heavy kick.

A low cry, as if of pain, issued from the snow pile; the snow was whirled in every direction by arms flung suddenly outward, and an Indian warrior, hideous with war-paint, stood face to face with the astonished, terror-stricken man.

He saw at once the cause of his horse's uneasiness, and that he was not in error when he imagined he saw the column of snow moving; for it was quite apparent, now, that the cunning savage had permitted the storm to weave a robe of snowflakes around him, and in this manner of disguise had approached his tent. It was a cunning expedient, fully worthy of the subtle brain of an American Indian.

The hand of the savage rested upon the hilt of a knife, and the white man comprehended his danger at a glance, and, turning, he darted into his tent for a weapon with which he could defend himself.

The red-skin, however, seemed to divine his intention, and, with a fierce war-whoop, sprung after him.

Before the white man could get hold of his revolver, the savage grasped him. He turned and grappled with the red foe. To-

gether they rolled to the earth. But the ground beneath them gave way, and, amid a cloud of dust and dirt, they sunk down into the black depths of what seemed a hidden cavern.

The white man felt the savage tear loose from his grasp. He heard a low cry of sudden terror, mingled with the rattling of dirt above him. He knew, then, that the savage had broken away, and was climbing out at the hole through which they had fallen. This unexpected termination of his attack had filled him with terror, and before the white could regain his feet, the crafty foe had made his escape from the pit.

It required but a moment for our friend to gain a true knowledge of his situation. Fully one-half of the ground floor of his tent had fallen in, and he was standing on the bottom of a pit over ten feet deep. All of his bundles, his weapons, and half of his camp-fire, had been precipitated in a confused mass into the hole, and the first thing he did was to secure the smoldering fire-brands from among his effects, place them in a heap at one side, and kindle them into a blaze. This occupied but a minute, and, as the flames grew larger and larger, and threw out their beams of light, he started with an exclamation of surprise.

He found he was standing in a cavern, whose extremities were lost in the darkness far beyond, and whose walls showed the rude handiwork of man.

The passage was narrow and about six feet high, and its walls testified to its having been cut through a strata of limestone. But, nowhere within sight of where he stood, did the earth above the passage appear to be as thin as the spot whereon stood his tent.

And now, as he gazed around him, all fears of danger departed. Something in this cavern filled his mind with that fascination which draws one on, even into unknown regions amid unknown dangers, to gratify a curiosity that is irresistible.

Under the influence of this fascination, our traveler took up a torch and set off to explore the cavern. As he advanced he noticed that there were numerous niches in the wall, and in one or two of these he found a stone hatchet, some arrow-heads of flint, and other things that satisfied him the cavern was the work of a people of a remote period. Continuing on, he suddenly ran across a human skeleton, that caused him to start with the feeling which one experiences when he unconsciously treads upon a grave. Without a doubt, he was an intruder in the catacomb of the dead who may have lived far back in an age coeval with the Mastodon.

But it was too late to turn back now. The adventurer's curiosity was gaining strength, and he pushed on. But he was again brought to a sudden halt by another sight. It was that of the figure of a man, of the Indian race, seated in one of those little niches in the walls. His hands rested upon his legs, and his head was thrown back against the wall in an attitude of repose. He was entirely naked, and in the glare of the adventurer's torch, his complexion appeared to be of a dusky, ashen hue. By his side lay a tomahawk, knife and stone hatchet. He appeared to be seated there asleep, but, when our friend called to him several times without arousing him, he saw that he was not possessed of life, but convinced himself that it was an image of stone—left there to guard the dead.

The adventurer advanced closer to examine the grim figure more closely. He stopped and bent over it. There was something so lifelike in its appearance, that he could not resist the temptation of putting out his hand and touching it. A cry of horror burst from his lips as he did so, for, simultaneous with the touch of his finger, a current of air sucked through the cavern and the figure crumbled to dust!

What a mystery! There, for centuries perhaps, had that warrior sat, a mere handful of dust, retaining a lifelike semblance, waiting only for the touch of the adventurer's finger and that faint breath of air to destroy it forever.

What next? The adventurer asked himself the question; then, holding his torch above his head, he peered forward into the gloom.

He started violently. His eyes fell upon something that started from the gloom toward him—something that sent the blood in icy currents through his veins.

It was an animal—a huge monster, not unlike the hooded serpent, with the rough, scaly folds of a fish. Two great angular head, with its dark cowl, its open jaws and long, yellow tusks, was thrust upward almost to the top of the cavern. It stood in the middle of the passage, as if to dispute the further intrusion of the adventurer within the silent precincts of that ancient tomb.

The stranger had no desire to advance closer to the monstrous creature, for, as the rays of his torch, wavering and flickering in the currents of air that was drawing through the cavern, fell across the scaly monster, they told him that it was *quicker with life!*

CHAPTER III. OLD SOLITARY.

THE time and scene of our story changes. It is autumn in all the fullness of its wondrous glory—the poet's ideal of this witching season. The forests still retain their livery of green and russet, and the broad, sweeping prairies lie clothed in their motley hues of emerald and brown. The rivers and brooks are flowing on undisturbed by the icy hand of the frost king. Balmy zephyrs drift lazily and languidly across the plain, and ruffle, with invisible fingers, the dappled robes of the wildwood monarchs.

Voices are heard in the depths of the wilderness and upon the boundless ocean of prairie. But they are those mysterious voices of nature that come, as it were, from out the realms of Nowhere, thrilling the breast of man with the soul of romance and the mystic glories of the material universe.

Within its environs of brown hills and wooded banks Silver Lake lay like a great bed of molten silver, with the blue heavens reflected in its glassy depths. Flocks of wild geese, ducks and snow-white swans sported upon its bosom with as little fear as though its echoes had never been broken by the footsteps of man, nor shocked by the crack of a rifle.

From the northern extremity of this lake dense woods extended away for miles and miles, while from the southern shore a broad expanse of prairie rolled away for weary leagues into the hazy distance.

The wooded shore was rough and precipitous, and densely fringed with willows

and water-olms. These trees and bushes, courting the light and freedom of the opening, had grown outward over the lake, and while their tops had shot upward again, their under foliage had grown downward, until now, in many places, the limbs trailed in the water. Under this green archway sported troops of muskrats, beavers and otters.

At the southern side of the lake the banks, low and marshy, were lined with a dense growth of tall reeds and aquatic plants that extended several rods out into the lake. Through this forest of reeds the otters and other animals had cut clean passages, which crossed and recrossed each other like the thoroughfares of a great city.

Near the close of day, toward the latter part of September, Silver Lake lay as tranquil, with flocks of fowls sporting upon its surface, as it had lain all day; and had a traveler happened there, he must have felt the exultation of an explorer, for there was nothing to indicate that the solitude of this lake had ever been broken by man. But whatever his feelings may have been upon a first impression, he soon would have been compelled to curb them; for, had his eyes been fixed upon the western shore near the southern edge of the woods, he would have seen a white puff of smoke shoot out from a clump of bushes, and, almost simultaneously, he would have heard the heavy report of a rifle come sharply across the lake.

Then, as a thousand wings beat the air, as the fowls arose from the water and circled about to indicate the solitude of the lake, the observer would have seen a small canoe, with a single occupant, shoot out from the shadow of the western shore and head directly toward a wild goose that lay beating the water in its death-throes.

The occupant of that canoe was an Indian warrior. He was painted and plumed in all the paraphernalia of the savage costume, and was armed with a heavy rifle of superior finish and caliber, a side tomahawk and scalping-knife. He was a noble specimen of his race, tall and well proportioned, with eyes like those of the hawk. His movements were easy and graceful, and as he drove his canoe outward into the lake, he plied the paddle with such skill that scarcely a sound was made.

It required but a few strokes to carry the feathered craft within reach of the dead goose, and reaching out, the Indian lifted it into the canoe.

A smile of joy swept over his bronzed face, when, upon examination, he found his bullet had pierced the brain of the fowl, a feat of marksmanship, considering the distance, worthy of the praise of a Boone or a Crockett.

Heading his canoe to the west, he soon ran in under cover of the drooping foliage from whence he first appeared, and was lost to view.

Then followed another silence, only to be soon broken, however, by the footsteps of a white man, who came from the woods, and pausing on the bank gazed out over the lake.

He was a man whose general appearance was calculated to enlist more than a passing notice, for he was a personage whose equal was seldom met with upon the border.

He was a man who bore the weight of fifty years as lightly as a youth of twenty. In fact, there was nothing to indicate to one that Old Solitary, the Hermit Trapper, had seen two-score and ten winters but the few threads of silver among his dark-brown hair, measured nearly seven feet in his moccasins, and was built otherwise in proportion to his height. Muscular and sinewy without an ounce of superfluous flesh, he was a Hercules in point of strength, and agile and supple as the panther. His face was well covered with a rough, bushy beard, that was faded by the sun and tobacco-juice. His features were rough and angular, but wore a pleasant expression. His eyes were of a dark-gray color, keen as the hawk's, mild and innocent as an infant's, but within you could see the soul of a rolled-up mischievous lunatic. These depths, ready to burst forth in that rein so characteristic of this noted woodsman.

He was dressed in a garb made after a style of his own, for oddity was one of his peculiarities, and he had a strong aversion to everything tending toward the Indian fashions.

Around the shoulders was a cape of stiff, heavy elk-hide, and to this was attached equally around the edge, innumerable narrow strips of ribbons of some strong fabric, that reached to his knees. These being distributed equally around his body, he was confined at the waist by a leather belt.

Beneath this gown of ribbons, he wore a woolen shirt and buck-skin trousers. As a protection to the cloth, the sleeves of the former were encircled in a spiral form by a narrow strip of buck-skin, sewed to the garment.

But what was most peculiar about his dress was its colors. Every thing, with the exception of his cap and moccasins, had been dyed a pale green hue. This he had done to avert a contrast of color while in the forest, and to blend his own form as much as possible with the green leaves and foliage. To this was owing much of his success as a trapper, for the beaver and deer, and also the Indian, could not detect his presence so readily, when the eye alone was depended upon.

He carried no weapons that were visible, with the exception of a long, heavy rifle, whose neatness showed the pride of its owner. A large powder-horn was strung at his side by means of a strap passing over his left shoulder.

The old trapper may have had other weapons about his person, but then he was one of the few of his class who did not believe courage and the power of intimidating an enemy, lay altogether in an ostentatious display of knives and pistols. This he had found, in a great measure by experience, and although he made no personal boast of his courage, great strength and the fear with which he knew the Indians regarded him, he was fully aware of his success as a trapper, and the characteristics that had made him so popular.

As had become consistent with his nature through force of habit and long life amid the dangers of the wilderness, he made a careful survey of the borders of the lake, to make sure that no lurking red-skin was about. Finding the coast clear, he stepped down to the water's edge and began moving around the lake, with cautious step.

As he neared a clump of willows overhanging the water's edge, a low, painful cry suddenly issued from its depths. This sound was followed by a plashing in the water, and instead of halting to ascertain the character of the noises, Old Solitary glided

into the bushes, and in a few minutes appeared on the opposite side, with a lifeless beaver in his hand.

"Tickle my scalp," the old hunter said to himself, a habit which invariably forced itself upon one who has no companion but his own thoughts; "petty pickin' promises to be good this fall. But then it's been a splendid year for foundation, and it's no more'n I prophesied; for business 'll be good this fall; but then, there's one thing that I've noticed in the thirty years that I've been huntin' and trappin', and that is whenever and wherever peltries are plenty, scalps are too—that is, the red-skins and white-skins will contend for the same ground, and the result will be contention for each other's hair. Now, like as not, there will be a pack of leadin' varlets 'round this lake afore long, and if they do come, that'll be a muss. I haven't lived here fifteen years, to vacate at sight of a pack of ornery Ingins. No, sirree. Atwixt me and the great Giver of Life, I'll never quit these diggin's while my scalp's over a warm skull. But what's the use of borrowin' trouble? That may not be a single red-skin come about. I hope that won't enny come, for it might go hard on the settlers down at Mound Prairie. Hullo! tickle my scalp if it isn't an otter, this time."

The last remark was induced by seeing an otter in one of his traps.

Securing the animal, he reset the trap and moved to the next. In the course of an hour he had visited all the traps set around the lake, and with the animals caught, he began retracing his footsteps toward the cabin.

He moved with a step as light and elastic as a youth, and the long strides which the length of his limbs enabled him to make, soon carried him to the summit of a bold, wooded hill overlooking the lake. Here he stopped, and turning, ran his dark-gray eyes over the lake, upon whose glassy bosom the shadows of evening were lengthening. From the lake, he bent his gaze southward and swept the great prairie, that seemed like a mighty ocean charmed to sleep, when its billows were rolling high. Not an object was visible on its bosom, and turning his gaze, he swept the dark, green woods on the opposite side of the little lake.

Here his keen eye caught sight of a thin wreath of smoke drifting up from among the tree-tops, and an expression of surprise and curiosity swept over his face on making the discovery.

Some one, he knew, was in the timber, and had gone into camp. It might be only a solitary hunter, and then he thought that his worst fears were about to be realized, and that it was a party of Indians come to hunt and trap about the lake. Then again, he thought it might be possible that it was a party of settlers from the settlement, a few miles east of the lake, come over to spend a few days hunting and fishing, as they had been in the habit of doing occasionally. At any rate, Old Solitary resolved to know whether that smoke arose from the camp of a friend or an enemy, just as soon as he could deposit his game at the cabin; and turning, he hurried on.

In a few minutes he came in sight of his cabin. It was a structure of no mean dimensions, built entirely of logs and covered with clapboards. It was situated on a bold eminence entirely devoid of vegetation, and commanded a good view of the valleys around it.

A stone chimney was one of the accommodations of this solitary abode, and the old trapper was not a little surprised to see a dense column of blue smoke rolling from its top. He was satisfied that he had left no fire on the hearth, and so it argued strongly that some one had taken possession of the cabin.

Hurrying up the hill, he approached the hut, opened the door and strode into the apartment.

To his surprise and indignation, he saw a powerful savage warrior seated before a roaring fire on the hearth, smoking with as much calm and stoical indifference as though he had been seated in his own lodge. And what seemed the most singular piece of impudence to the old trapper, the savage scarcely deigned to notice him when he entered.

A single glance around the room, told our old friend that the savage had been taking great liberties with his things. Some traps, an ax and hatchet, and other articles that he had left, he saw were gone, and he was satisfied the Indian had taken them, for some purpose, in which there was a hidden meaning.

As the old trapper continued his gaze about the room to see how far the savage's liberties had extended, his eyes fell upon his couch of skins in one corner of the apartment, and his heart gave a great throb, and his eyes glittered like steel, at what he discovered there.

(To be continued.)

The Rock Rider: OR, THE SPIRIT OF THE SIERRA. A TALE OF THE THREE PARKS.

BY FREDERICK WHITTAKER.
AUTHOR OF "THE RED RAJAH," "THE KNIGHT OF THE EMBURY," "DOUBLE-DEATH," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VII. THE CAVERN OF DEATH.

THE shades of evening had gathered over the Sierra, and the Indians were gone from the pass where Black Wolf had been killed, when the cautious creak of the mule's hoofs broke the stillness, and the gaunt, unearthly figure of the Rock Rider made its appearance at the summit of the gorge. In a moment more he came trotting slowly down the pass, with the fearful pale face on the round shield gleaming through the darkness.

There, in the midst of the gorge, lay the dead warrior, pinned to the ground by the unnerving lance of the weird stranger, his sightless eyes glaring up at the stars in the evening sky, all alone.

His companions had left him, an unusual thing with Indians, who are scrupulous to carry off their dead on most occasions.

The Rock Rider went up to the lance, still standing in the ground, and muttered: "Another life gone, another victim to his own crimes. Oh, children of the prairie, how often would I have forgiven ye my wrongs, but ye would keep on at the foul task of murder and rapine. Black Wolf in name and nature, thou shouldst thank me that saved thee from the gallows-tree, and set thee among the nobles and princes that fell before the arm of the Rock Rider. Ride on to the hunting-grounds of thy fathers in

peace, and thy head shall be honored by a place in the Cavern of Death."

As he spoke, he wrenched away the spear from its place, and stuck it again in the ground. Then he stooped down from the saddle, with a long knife in his hand, with which he made but a single slash at the neck of the dead Indian.

In another moment he was up again, and dangling from his hand was seen a human head!

He replaced the knife in his girdle, plucked up the spear once more, and set upon the point the ghastly trophy.

"It is finished," muttered the Rock Rider. "God receive thy soul, and cleanse it from evil in the purifying flames of purgatory."

The strange being turned away his mule, and rode up the pass again, the round dark head on the spear-point relieved against the sky.

The tramp of the gaunt mule echoed up the gorge to the summit, when mule and rider turned into a black canon and disappeared.

Minutes passed away in total silence, when the tramp was again heard, this time on the summit of the cliffs.

Presently the two dark figures appeared against the sky, with the terrible trophy of death at the end of the spear. The Rock Rider and his gaunt steed appeared to tread on air at times, so closely did they approach the edge of the precipices, and then they went bounding over chasms, and stepping from point to point of needle-like pinnacles, till they both reached a broad slope that seemed to climb to the summit of a lofty peak, which was furrowed here and there with deep, black ravines.

Into one of these ravines both jumped, and drew up before the entrance of the same cavern whence they had started a few hours before.

Then the deep voice of the Rock Rider shouted:

"Cato! Cato! Where are you, imbecile?"

A faint, stuttering voice was heard from the gorge behind some distance from the black mouth of the cave.

"Here, marse cappen. Oh! bress de Lord, you isn't dead, and po' Cato isn't luff alone f'orever! Oh, bress de Lord, marse cappen!"

Then the hurrying steps of the negro were heard up the gorge, and he came running out of the darkness to hold his master's bridle.

"How is this, Cato?" demanded the Rock Rider, sternly. "Why have you left your post in the Cavern of Death?"

"Oh, marse cappen," began Cato, shivering. "I done gone in dar once, but oh, marse cappen, 'twas awful, sah, awful! De heads dey groan, and de debil he be at work at dem, shuah, for po' Cato hear 'em a groanin' an' talkin' to each oder; yes, marse cappen, so he did now, shuah, and I isn't no liar, sah."

"Fool," said the Rock Rider, harshly. "Twas but the wind groaning through the crovies. Go in and light the fire on the altar, for I have found a fresh guest for the Cavern of Death."

Cato dropped on his knees trembling, and ejaculated:

"Oh, marse cappen, honey sweet marse cappen, don't you make me go in dar, sah! De debil in dar, shuah, for I hear um scutterin' roun' dar quite lively, so I did, sah. Don't you go for to make me do no sich tings, marse cappen, or fo' God, I isn't gwine to— Yuh-h-h-h!"

He ended with a howl that might have been heard a mile, as the Rock Rider, with out a word, lowered the ghastly head on the point of the lance, till the cold flesh touched his cheek.

Cato leaped up as if he had been struck with a whip, yelling louder than ever, but his master cut him short sternly.

"Into the cavern, fool! Am I to wait all night? Quick, or I will call forth the spirits to seize thee."

The last threat appeared to decide Cato, for he scudded into the cavern at a rapid pace, and the Rock Rider slowly dismounted from his mule, and turned the animal loose, when it walked into the cave after the negro.

Presently a faint red light glimmered from the interior, and almost immediately it was followed by a fearful howl from Cato, as some black thing dashed past him, and ran out of the cavern.

As quick as thought the long knife of the Rock Rider was out, and he made a bold cut at the dark object as it shot by him.

A sort of agonized yell, instantly stifled, followed, and a dead wolf lay at the feet of the solitary, while Cato came running out, howling:

"See, dok," said the Rock Rider, fiercely. "Nothing but a coyote, and thou hast let him into the sanctuary. Back and light the flame, or I'll cast thee over the cliffs into the valley. Quick, I say!"

Again Cato entered the cavern, this time very slowly and unwillingly. Thrice he returned, and thrice did his master drive him in by threats.

At last he dashed desperately in, saying: "Well den, marse cappen, if I see a dead nigger to-morrow mornin', 'tain't my fault no more!"

In a few moments more the same red glimmering flame was seen in the interior of the cave, and not till then did the Rock Rider advance.

He followed the glimmer of that flame through a long, winding cavern full of deep recesses, in one of which the sound of the mule's teeth munching at fodder, was plainly audible. Ahead was a low archway in the solid rock, and beyond it stood a cubical block of stone, on the summit of which burned a bright flame, that seemed to illuminate a second cavern.

Into this light emerged Cato, hurrying desperately toward the entrance of the cavern, with an expression of ghastly fear on his black face.

But the sight of his terrible master coming toward him, holding out on the presented spear the grinning head of the Indian warrior, seemed to quench all desire in Cato to go further in that direction. The negro recoiled to the side of the altar, where he fell on his knees, the picture of abject terror; and slowly the Rock Rider entered the Cavern of Death.

It was well named. A large, round cavern, with a lofty roof, the light of the fire was insufficient to illuminate the intense blackness of darkness that brooded over every side and the ceiling, out of its influence.

The stone altar was made of a single white stalagmite, fashioned by the hand of man into its present shape; and the faint drip, drip of water at long intervals in the recesses of the cavern announced that others were in the process of formation.

Out of the black darkness overhead white, ghostly forms leaned down, which were nothing but stalactites, and out of the darkness around a troop of pale statues seemed flitting, under the flickering light of the fire.

But around the altar itself was the most ghastly assembly of all.

Standing erect, leaning against white stalactites, and apparently as fresh as if just killed, a row of human bodies, all headless, met the view, dressed in the costume of Indian warriors. On the ground before each of them lay the head which had belonged to it in life, plumed and painted as if on the war-path, and the weapons of each, all firearms, lay beside the heads.

The Rock Rider stepped into the circle, and drove the butt of the spear into a crevice of the rock, while the head remained grinning aloft, when the strange being addressed the motionless circle.

He leaned the round shield against the altar, where the pale face remained staring up at him, and spoke in his deep, powerful voice:

"Warriors and chiefs, once owners of this broad continent, I bring a fresh guest for your circle to-night. The black buzzard of the prairie flew to the mountain to-day and hovered above my head, and I knew from the voice of the wind that death was coming to the Sierra. Chiefs and warriors, ye know how the Rock Rider has hated blood, and how often he has been compelled to shed it. Tell me only where my little one has gone, and the red-man shall roam free of the Rock Rider's spear. Refuse, and I must e'en go on with my task, till the last chief of your tribes has fallen to avenge the death of my beloved one."

Then the wild being took up the shield and held it aloft, so that the face was slowly turned around the circle.

"Look at them, beloved," said the Rock Rider, in a strange tone of joy. "If vengeance belonged to man, have I not avenged thee? See the form of the Coiling Snake, the same that struck thee, my own. I met him in fair fight, with the lance of a true knight against the stolen rifle of the pale-face, and he went down. I remembered thee, and offered him life, if he would tell me where he had hidden our little one. But the red liar said that he knew not, and I slew him. One by one they have fallen: Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and the tiger of the South, the cruel Apache. See where they stand, awaiting the resurrection. I slew them like men, and they died like wolves. And now I bring thee the worst of all, Black Wolf."

He laid down his shield as he spoke, and detached the head of the slain warrior from the spear-point.

He held it up and addressed the silent circle once more.

"Chiefs and warriors, behold Black Wolf, the Comanche chief. He was a coward and a murderer of women. Not many moons ago he led a party to swoop down on a peaceful cottage. He brained the child in its cradle, and slew the mother, when the father was away. Like the wolf he ravened. Like the wolf he died, impaled. His body lies in the pass, to fatten the buzzard and the crow. His is fit company for wicked chiefs and warriors until ye repent. Let him lie there till the trumpet sounds."

He laid the head down in the center of the circle, and then to Cato, saying:

"Old servant and friend, we have fasted to-night, and the Rock Rider must away again. Death is around us, for the night-hawk screams in the valley. Cato, the time is coming when we shall find her, for I saw her in my dreams twice last night. God knows I would not slay more if I could, but they would not heed my command. The red wolves are in the valley to destroy the white strangers, and I must save them. 'This no sin to take life to save a better life. Come.'"

He took up the shield and lance as he spoke, and stalked from the cavern into the outer one.

Cato had been kneeling there, shivering, all the while, his lips moving, as if he was praying for safety, his eyes fixed on vacancy. The negro was fairly benumbed with superstitious terror.

As the Rock Rider turned to depart, the poor darkey uttered a deep groan of relief, which was distinctly echoed from the back of the cavern. Cato's wool bristled up on his head. He leaped to his feet, cast a single terrified glance round him, and rushed from the inner cavern to where his master was standing, watching the gaunt mule finish its feed.

There the negro fell on his knees, and clung to the other's skirts, crying:

"Oh, marse capten! Sweet, good marse capten, don't go fur to leave Cato this night, when dat murderin' red nigger 'll be coming round, shuah, to look for um head! Oh, marse capten, wait fur de mornin'! You'll done go an' bruk you neck, you will, shuah, an' I see gwine to be luff all alone, fur dem ghostesses to ketch. I see no coward, marse capten, you know dat's well's I, but dem ghostesses dem skeers de life out of po' Cato, and you comes home an' luff him dead gone o' dese days, an' all de ghostesses runnin' off wid um heads under um arms, shuah. An' maybe um take Cato 'long wid dem. Oh-h-h-h!"

He ended with a prolonged shivering groan, completely overcome at the thought.

The Rock Rider addressed him with much more kindness than usual.

"Come with me, Cato," he said, "and I will show thee why I must go."

Cato followed willingly enough, keeping fast hold of his master's skirt, and the Rock Rider led the way down a side passage of the cave till the faint glimmer of starlight ahead of them warned them that they were approaching another exit.

They came out on the mountain-side, looking down a precipice into a small valley opposite to the South Park.

The whole valley was dotted with campfires, and groups of painted and plumed warriors moved about between them.

"The Apaches are there, Cato," said the Rock Rider, gravely. "They do not come all the way from Mexico for naught. The Comanches are coming by the other pass, and there are four white men in the valley. Have two tribes united thus for naught? Come with me."

Cato followed silently back through the cave, till they emerged in full view of the South Park.

At that very moment the brilliant stars of a bursting rocket showed over a gap in the Sierra on the opposite side of the valley, and the Rock Rider started, with the exclamation:

"I have it at last. 'Tis a train from the northern forts, and the tribes have heard of its coming. Fool that I was not to think

of it before! Now, indeed, I must away, Cato. In yonder train, perhaps, are women and children, and they *must* be saved. The mule, quick!"

Cato made no more objections now. Perhaps he thought himself safer where he was, than following his master.

In a few minutes more the gaunt mule was on its way down the mountain, and Cato took his seat at the mouth of the ravine, muttering:

"I isn't gwine to go in dar till mornin'! Marse capten may be crazy, but dis nigger knows whar him best place is, an' he don't stir a peg, ef all de ghostesses runs away wid um heads all night."

CHAPTER VIII.

YAKOP.

We must return to Carl Brinkerhoff, who left the tree of rendezvous on perhaps the most laudable errand of the three parties, in search of his faithful dog, Yakop.

The cautious and phlegmatic German was also the best suited of the three to the position in which he found himself, for he was a magnificent shot, with nerves like iron.

He walked quietly away toward a part of the valley where there was plenty of cover, and secured himself a way of retreat to the mountains before he did any thing else. Then he seated himself at the foot of a tree, drew from his pocket a small whistle, and sounded three short notes upon it.

That done, he leaned back against the trunk of the tree, and waited patiently.

He had not so very long to wait. Before ten minutes were up, there was an eager bustling through the grass; and Yakop, panting as from a long run, came up to his master and licked his hand.

Then the dog sat down and looked up in Carl's face, as if waiting to be interrogated. Brinkerhoff commenced the catechism with perfect gravity, and really seemed to understand Yakop as well as the dog did him.

"Yakop," he began, "haf you seen de Injuns, mein hund?"

"Wuff," answered Yakop.

"Vos dere many of dem round dere, Yakop? Nein. I knows you donst talk mosh, mein hund. You says 'yah' oder 'nein,' and das ist all. Say, vos dere mean-ship, (twenty) Yakop?"

"Vos dere dreissig, (thirty) Yakop?"

Yakop shook his head and growled.

"Ah ha! Between meening and dreissig, das ist genig, Yakop. Now, mein leiber hund, s'pose you show me vere dey is. You knows de way, I s'pose; hey, Yakop?"

"Wuff," said Yakop, joyfully, and the two set forth together toward the Indian camp, where they arrived just about the same time that Gustave Belcour tried his ventriloquial tricks.

Brinkerhoff witnessed the arrival of Red Lightning from his scout, and noted the consternation caused by the mysterious voice in the branches of the tree. He sat by, laughing heartily and silently, as he saw the Indians firing up into the branches, and climbing up to search the tree; for, unlike them, he could see Belcour stealing off.

But he noticed that the Indians did not remain dupes of the tree trick long, for, after a short search, they came down and rushed for their horses, feeding in a hollow beyond. Carl, lying down on the side of an adjacent knoll, saw them ride slowly away toward the east, as the first flush of dawn tipped the peaks of the Sierra.

Then the sweeping white mist began to rise, thicker and thicker, and every thing was shut out from his view.

But where the eye of man was at fault, the scent of the dog proved a guide. Preceded by Yakop, Brinkerhoff set out to grope his way back toward the lonely tree of rendezvous, rifle in hand, ready for action.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COUSINS.

AFTER the departure of Gustave Belcour and Carl Brinkerhoff from the tree of rendezvous, Somers and Buford remained for some time near each other, conversing in whispers, and watching intently. But the sleepy influences of the night, and the apparent absence of all danger, speedily overcame their endeavors to keep awake.

First one, then the other, began to nod, and finally both of them fell back on the grass, and snored peacefully, in blissful unconsciousness of danger.

As good luck would have it, no harm came to them in consequence. Their abode was perfectly sheltered, and the Indians had entered the valley in the dark, so that there was no present danger of discovery.

The first peep of dawn awoke both, and they instinctively started up, full of apprehension, only to find themselves inquired in a white sea of mist. Not a sound was to be heard where they were, except the occasional snort of a horse under the tree.

"I say, Jack," quoth Buford, presently, "why shouldn't we set out as well as those two other fellows? I don't believe those Indians amount to much, after all said."

"I'm game," responded the Kentuckian (Somers was a "Blue Grass" man), "if you are. I was just thinking that it wouldn't do to let those two foreigners do all the work, and come home to blow about it. I'm good for twenty-four Indians, if they don't pop me over before I get through my loads. But what can you do, old fellow? You never were very famous for shooting."

"I don't believe in shooting on horse-back," said Buford, gravely. "I've seen too many shots thrown away in that manner. Here's something worth all your pistols in a *melee*, if a man knows how to use it."

And the Virginian tapped his saber as he spoke. It was his pet weapon, and he was the only one in the party who carried one, simply because he was a first-class swordsman and rider.

Somers grinned. It was an old matter of argument between him and his cousin.

"What can you keep your old saber?" he said. "What'll you do with it if you get shot down at twenty yards?"

"I shall not get shot at twenty yards, Jack," said the Virginian, quietly. "I've tried the experiment before this, and I've seen your fellows turn tail before ours in a charge, not because ours were braver, but because we had drawn sabers, and your pistols were empty."

"I can shoot a bullet into each telegraph pole in a line, at full gallop," began Somers, a little boastfully, but Buford checked him.

"You may, perhaps, Jack," he said; "but Indians are poor shots at best. Come, don't let's blow our own trumpets. I believe in the pistol, inside of six feet, in a gallop, but only as a reserve. Come, will you mount?"

"Ay, by Jove!" said Jack, and they led out their horses, bridled them, and saw every thing into its place. Belcour's and Brinkerhoff's horses were left under the oak tree—an exceedingly careless proceeding, but exactly in keeping with the rashness of the whole party of young madcaps.

Both of the cousins were splendidly mounted on blooded horses, able to run a four-mile race on very good time, and it was this very fact that had emboldened them to so much rashness.

Jack Somers carried two revolvers in his belt, and two more in *his boots*, a favorite and convenient Southern plan of bearing weapons. Buford, on the contrary, had his pistols in the holsters of his saddle, and only bore on his person a long cavalry saber, which he had sharpened to a razor-like edge, and now carried in a leathern scabbard.

They rode off into the mist just as the light began to gild the tips of the Sierra, which they could faintly see gleaming through the white clouds above them, with a rosy radiance inexpressibly lovely. The trees were invisible until close by, when they loomed out with startling suddenness, like ghosts in the fog.

Jack Somers rode headlong into the middle of a pool before he saw it, and when he turned his horse to go out, a thick wall of mist swooped down and before he knew where he was, he found himself separated from his companion, and all alone.

This was sufficiently puzzling, as there were no means of finding the true direction in such a fog. The imprudent Kentuckian, heedless of danger, began to call out:

"Frank! Frank! where the deuce are you?"

"Here," cried the voice of his cousin, some way off. "Don't make such a noise; there are Indians about, shut up."

"Indians be hanged!" shouted the reckless youth; "I'm game for all the Indians in the valley."

Crack! came a rifle out of the mist on the other side, and the dull red flash shone through the white cloud for an instant. The bullet flew far wide of the mark, having been only fired by guess-work; but the crack of Somers' revolver heralded a shot that was aimed straight for the place where the flash had been.

It was answered by nearly twenty red flashes from different points, and even by guess-work as it was, the balls whistled dismally close. Then, as if by magic, a gust of wind came down from the Sierra, the sun showed his fiery disk between the peaks, and the mist began to thin and rise up under the influence of his beams.

And then it was that Somers saw a long line of mounted figures, in open order, coming through the mist like ghosts, and heard a fierce yell as they perceived him.

The next moment they swept forward at full speed upon him, a line of painted savages, on horses spotted like leopards, scarlet plumes and blankets waving, weapons glittering in the sun, and bright sabers in the hands of more than half of them.

He saw all this in an instant, and then he drove the spurs into his horse, and away he went across the front of their line, heading for the middle of the valley. As he turned, he caught sight of Frank Buford, also at full speed, but on the other side of the Indians, with a single chief on a horse spotted like a jaguar, in full pursuit.

Such a scampering over the valley as ensued Jack never forgot. The Indians, flogging their spirited little horses to full speed, sent shot after shot at the single fugitive, fired wildly, and doing little damage, but trying their best to cut Jack off from his refuge, and hem him in between them and the mountain.

But for the superior swiftness of his horse Somers would have been in an awkward scrape. As it was, he just managed to brush past the left hand warrior within ten feet, dropping him with a pistol bullet as he passed, his first shot.

After that he was comparatively safe, for the racing speed of his thoroughbred and the quick distance of the small horses of the Comanches. Indeed they soon dropped the pursuit, and turned away after Frank Buford, whom Somers perceived at a little distance off, turning round to charge his solitary pursuer.

They were several hundred yards from the rest, in an open glade, shut in on every side by live-oak trees, with a little pool in front. Frank Buford, having reached the end of this glade, had turned back; and as Somers looked, he met the chief on the jaguar-spotted steed in full career. Both were armed with sabers, and they met fairly.

For a moment there was a clash and a glitter, and then the horses went circling round, while Red and White cut and hewed at each other. But the combat did not last long. Somers could see that Frank was only playing with the Indian, who knew nothing of the proper use of a weapon like the sword. The other Comanches were coming rapidly up, when Buford suddenly pressed his horse close to that of the Indian chief.

Red Lightning made an effort to cut him down, but the raising of his arm proved his ruin. As the chief's blade went up, Buford delivered a fierce point (in fencers' phrase) right at the Indian, and Red Lightning threw up his arms, and fell back on his horse. Then Somers saw no more, for, with a vengeful yell, the Comanches bore down on Buford, and the Kentuckian put spurs to his horse, and galloped down to aid his cousin against the fearful odds that surrounded him in the glade.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 145.)

Treatment of the Hair.—Gray hairs require for a cent apiece. Hair-dressers inquire of their customers for them, and beg that they may be saved from the combs in dressing. Gray hair is the most expensive and difficult to obtain. There is now a strong motive for young women to cultivate the growth of fine heads of hair, as their tresses in moments of difficulty may be worth a dowry to them. Mothers are warned against cutting their children's hair too often. If it is of good thickness at first, scissors should not be touched to the head; cutting makes the hair grow thicker but coarser. Frequent brushing while the hair is of moderate length, and washing once a week with a teaspoonful of liquid ammonia in a large bowlful of warm water, is the best treatment possible. Keep it done up loosely, so that the air can move through the hair freely. If any stimulant is required, half an ounce of dry ammonia, rubbed into a pint of olive oil, is the finest dressing to be made, surpassing bay rum and any mixture of spirits and oil. This dressing prevents hair from turning gray, if any thing will do so, and urges its growth.

WHEN THE WHITE SWAN.

BY ST. ELMO.

When the white swan spreads its sail,
When the ev'ning breezes pale,
When the ripples of the lake
Murmur softly 'neath the brake:
Ah, 'tis then I think of thee,
And thy sigh-like form I see,
Though the vision fades and dies,
Still I seem to see those eyes.

When the morning star grows pale,
And the dewdrops in the vale
Cast afar their silver light,
And drobe the shades of night;
Then my spirit longs for thee,
But, alas, I must not be,
Never can I claim thee mine,
But must bow to mine's shrine.

When the white swan skims the lake,
And the crystal waters break
Softly on the purple shore,
With a gentle, soothing roar;
Then my heart is full of woe,
For my spirit longs to know
If she ever thinks of one
Who her dark-eyed beauty won?

Jocelyne's Engagements.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

SHE sat on a low hassock in front of the glowing sea-coal fire, whose rosy light lent softest blushes to her cheeks, and displayed, in more magical shades than any artificial flames could have done, the classic outlines of her head and face, the dazzling fairness of her complexion, the exquisite hue of her purple-blue eyes, and the pristine beauty of her yellow-gold hair.

She was very pretty, very graceful and ladylike, but her attitude, as she sat before the fire, on the little low hassock, her chin resting on her hand, spoke plainly that if Jocelyne Mayburg was pretty and graceful, she was not very conceited.

Just now, Miss Jocelyne Mayburg was self-communing on a remarkably interesting subject; and the subject was twofold and inseparable; in plainer terms, Jocelyne was thinking of love and—Alfred Symington.

A moment before and Jocelyne had asked her wayward little self a plain, direct question; and, instead of answering it as boldly as she had put it, she sat, blushing and trembling, and feeling quite confused, all by herself.

Did she love handsome Alf? Would she prefer him, on a salary of two thousand a year, to Mr. Eliphalet Dixon, the wealthy Wall street broker, who called so often to see her, although he took very good care to inquire of the pompous footman at the door for Mrs. Symington, instead of Miss Mayburg, who was only companion to Mrs. Symington, Alf's great aunt, with whom he boarded since his return from the German Universities.

Mr. Dixon indeed! The idea of comparing him with young, handsome, saucy Alf! Why—

And then the drawing-room door opened with a little squeak, and old Mrs. Symington came hobbling in, gold-headed cane in hand.

"Jocelyne! you here, and the gas not lighted? Where are you—yes, I see, by the fire! I suppose you are dreaming, like the sentimental young lady you are."

The voice was not altogether unkind, yet there was a certain rasping harshness in it that Jocelyne, in her four years' servitude, had never become used to. So, now, she started, almost guiltily.

"Hardly dreaming, Mrs. Symington. I am wide awake, and day-dreams and I do not agree, generally. Shall I light the chandelier?"

She arose from her low seat and took a match from a bronze Mars on the mantel.

"Only one jet. And then you can go to the reception-room to see Mr. Dixon. He inquired particularly after you."

Jocelyne gave a little, almost unconscious gesture of impatience.

"There's no need to appear vexed, Jocelyne, for we all know you are pleased at Mr. Dixon's attentions. And well you might be pleased and proud, too, for, if he takes a notion to marry you, you'll be mistress of a home equal to this of mine. Alfred was saying only the other day—there, run along! Mr. Dixon won't want to be kept waiting."

But Jocelyne didn't run along; contrariwise, she walked very slowly, very deliberately, and not a little stubbornly.

So Alf Symington had said something about the other day—had he? Evidently about her and Mr. Dixon, judging from the words of Alf's aunt.

Had he endorsed his aunt's opinion that a good chance was offered her in marrying this homely old suitor?

Well, if he had said so—and Jocelyne's scarlet lips grew momentarily pale as she compressed them tightly as if to keep back the moan of pain she feared would escape her.

Was Eliphalet Dixon going to make her an offer of marriage? If he did—and a rushing thought of what words would have leaped to her glad lips had Alf Symington been the suitor, brought a flood of tears to her eyes, that she would not let pass.

No, she would not cry for Alf Symington; if she had been a fool to fall in love with a man who never had made love to her, she would not be fool enough to give out of her hands this one chance to become independent forever of Alf Symington and his relations.

Poor Jocelyne! there was a lump in her throat that threatened every instant to choke her as she resolved, and strengthened her resolve by rushing hastily in the reception-room, and up to a short, stout, spectacled gentleman, who arose from behind an evening paper, with a painful pomposity of manner.

"You are very good—too good—Miss Mayburg! Your friend, Mrs. Symington, told you I particularly craved the honor of your company?"

Jocelyne bowed.

"Mrs. Symington said you wished to see me, and I came at once."

"I thank you, Miss Mayburg. I thank you, and I hope your speedy presence is an augury of a favorable answer to my suit. Miss Mayburg, my errand is, to ask you to be my wife, to offer you what I have—my name, my heart, my hand. Will you accept it, and thereby greatly honor me?"

It was a singular offer; so calm, so businesslike, so honest, so earnest; and with one memory to Alf Symington, one awful strangling of love and pleasant hopes, Jocelyne turned her white face toward him, and laid her stony hand in his own.

"It is I who am honored. I thank you, Mr. Dixon, and I will marry you."

He kissed her little frigid hand; took a jeweler's box from his vest-pocket, in grave

silence, and placed on Jocelyne's forefinger a diamond ring that cost more money than her four year's salary, all told, could have purchased.

So she was betrothed; and when he had gone, Jocelyne fled to her room; tore off the magnificent jewel, flung it across the room, and sat down crouching in the window, crying in utter abandonment of grief.

This, then, was what her secret, girlish dreams had ended in; her innocent womanly visions of a rapturous courtship, whispered vows, and happiness to the full!

And now she was Eliphalet Dixon's betrothed! she, who only an hour or so before, at the dinner-table, had blushed when Alf laughingly remarked, there must be a wedding follow, because Jocelyne and Mrs. Symington, he and uncle Philip, crossed hands quite accidentally.

Dear little Jocelyne! she was a riddle, though, even to herself; for, after a good cry, she hunted for her ring, put it on, bathed her eyes in rose-water, and went down stairs, fully determined to show Alf Symington she never had dreamed of him for a moment.

And it seemed such a comfort to her that he was to blame for her misery; for would she have accepted old dear Mr. Dixon, if she had not known positively that Alf said something?

In the illuminated drawing-room Mrs. Symington and Alf were sitting; and Jocelyne walked slowly in, never a muscle faltering, even when she felt Alf's bright eyes fixed on her face.

Mrs. Symington's shrill voice accosted her before she was fairly over the threshold.

"We know all about it, Jocelyne, so there's no need of you telling us. Mr. Dixon stepped in, and Alfred and I have congratulated him, as we do you. I'm very glad, and I must say you acted very sensibly."

Jocelyne bowed, quietly—she was so calm that she felt benumbed.

"Thank you, Mrs. Symington. I am glad you are pleased."

She swept over the carpet toward the grate where she had built air-castles for herself and Alf an hour ago, and leaned, shivering, against the marble mantel.

Alfred Symington followed her.

"Miss Jocelyne, my prediction has come true. May I have the pleasure of offering my warmest well wishes, and assuring you of my desire that you may be happy in your new life?"

He was holding out his hand; he was looking at her with a curious light in his eyes; and, like one in a tantalizing dream, Jocelyne reached forth her fingers, and murmured something unintelligible.

Then Alf took his hat and sauntered out; and Jocelyne went up to her room, sure, now, he never had cared for her.

"I don't see what I am going to do with her; why, she's positively as stubborn as—as— Well, well, I never saw any one half so self-willed."

Alf Symington looked up from the paper he was reading.

"Who's that, auntie? Were you speaking to me?"

"Yes, I was speaking to you. I say I don't know whatever to do with Jocelyne Mayburg. Here she's been engaged to Mr. Dixon for all the three years you've been to Germany again; she's been putting him off, and putting him off, and now she has actually refused to marry him at all!"

Alf laid his paper down; he was getting interested.

"She's given it up, eh? Well, aunt Sarah, I think she is a sensible girl."

"Alfred! what can you mean? Sensible to throw away such a chance!"

"Exactly, because she is too good and sweet for old Dixon."

"Alfred! I verily believe you uphold her. Dear! dear! if I don't finally feel afraid you will fall in love with her yourself!"

"Don't worry, auntie mine. I assure you I do not intend falling in love with little Jocelyne, for the simple reason that I did that years ago."

He spoke with a tender reverence in his voice, that was indicative of the strength of the silent love of those years.

Mrs. Symington stared at him in speechless astonishment.

"Well, I never! Why in the world did you let Mr. Dixon carry off your prize, then?"

"I trusted to Jocelyne's own heart for her decision, though it nearly wrecked mine. Aunt, you never will know all I have suffered since—"

He never finished that sentence, for Jocelyne stole through the door, that had stood ajar, and put her arms around his neck, and laid her cheeks, that were wet with tears, on his face.

And before horrified Mrs. Symington, too!

"Alf! Alf! *won't* you love me now? Oh! Alf! I never cared for anybody else but you! But I heard—I thought you didn't love me!"

And do you think Mr. Alfred Symington could disregard the warm, clinging arms, the sweet, murmuring voice of this girl he had loved so long?

Not he! He sprang up, caught her in his arms, and at last Jocelyne realized the betrothal of true hearts that she had so often dreamed of.

The following excellent table farmers will do well to paste into a scrap-book for future reference.

Five yards wide by nine hundred and sixty-eight yards long contains one acre.

Ten yards wide by four hundred and eighty-four yards long contains one acre.

Twenty yards wide by two hundred and forty-two yards long contains one acre.

Forty yards wide by one hundred and twenty-one yards long contains one acre.

Eighty yards wide by sixty and a half yards long contains one acre.

CHRISTMAS.

BY CLYDE RAYMOND.

The yearly joy has come, the holiday
That wins all souls into its sacred peace,
And bids the troubles of each life to cease,
That mirth may have its sway.

How cheerfully we put aside the cares
Which mark the common pleasures of the year,
And with glad hearts accept the welcome cheer
The festive day prepares.

Away with toil! away with grief and pain!
Let roses bloom amid the shrouding snow,
Without a thorn to guard them as they glow—
Let "Merry Christmas" reign!

Oh, happy hours that swiftly pass away!
When joyous friends and relatives unite
Once more to celebrate, with spirits light,
The Saviour's natal day.

Turn back, unroll the past, oh, shadowy Time,
Reveal the rapt and wondering gaze of them
For whom shone out the Star of Bethlehem
With holy light sublime!

Show us again those wise men of the East,
Who, hoping and believing, onward trod,
To find the birthplace of the Son of God,
And hail Him as their Priest.

Onward, still onward, following afar,
And still unmindful of all things beside
The steady light of that unvarying guide,
The clear and brilliant star.

And when that star, its mission now complete,
"Came and stood over where the young child was,"
They, whose great minds controlled, directed
Kneel at young Jesus' feet.

And in the ages that have elapsed by
Since they their love and adoration told,
And gave Him gifts—frankincense, myrrh and gold—
He hath been always nigh.

Been nigh to pardon, to redeem and love,
And, bright as Bethlehem's resplendent star,
He points to the spirit-world afar,
That peaceful realm above.

Oh, merry bells, ring out your Christmas chime,
This day, to Earth and Heaven alike so dear,
And let it be, of all the passing year,
The "maddest, merriest time!"

Though northern winds sweep down with angry
Roar,
Or sunshine throws its charms or winter's pall,
May this day of love and gladness bring to all
A rich and golden store.

Oh, happy season! when young hearts beat high,
When hope illumines every cherished dream,
And all things fair and pleasant seem
Not born to fade and die.

When Hope, with changeful pinion, wings her
flight,
And the future's gay, enchanted bowers,
And charms away the feeling, rose-tinted hours
With visions all too bright.

A Strange Girl:
A NEW ENGLAND LOVE STORY.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOLF DEMON," "OVERLAND
KIT," "RED MAREPFA," "ACE OF SPADES,"
"HEART OF BIRN," "WITCHES OF
NEW YORK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE IVORY PORTRAIT.

For a little while the two walked on in silence. Lydia seemed lost in thought and Paxton watched her downcast face eagerly and earnestly.

"Well, will you not speak?" he said, after a long pause.

"Suppose that there is a barrier between us," she said, slowly; "suppose that it is impossible for me to marry you?"

"How can that be?" Sinclair asked, in astonishment, and for the first time he appeared troubled.

"There may be twenty reasons, any one of which would render our union impossible."

"Yes, there may be," he said, doubtfully, "but you do not say that there is."

"Why force me to say cruel words? I wish to spare you pain," she said, earnestly.

"Lydia, if there is really a reason why we should not come together, you have not acted rightly in this matter," he said, gravely.

"I know it, and it is that which makes me miserable," she said, sadly. "I was so happy in your society that I was not conscious of the danger to which I was exposing both of us. It was like sailing on the stream above the rapids; one glides along unconscious of danger until the roar of the water dashing upon the breaking rocks rises upon the air, and then, fast-locked in the embrace of the tide, escape is impossible. Blame me for all that has occurred. It is all my fault. I saw that you were beginning to care for me, but—Heaven help me!—I had not courage to warn you of your danger."

"Lydia, you speak in riddles. Why not tell me at once if there be any reason which prevents our marriage?"

"There is—there is!" The voice was almost a wail.

"Yes, but explain."

"Oh, it is too dreadful!"

By this time the two had reached the quarry. The sun was sinking slowly behind the far-off horizon line.

"Let us climb up to the top of the rocks; we've a good hour of daylight yet," he said. "We can sit and chat for twenty or thirty minutes, and then have plenty of time to get home before dark."

Slowly they climbed to the top of the hill and sat down upon some huge rocks which cropped out of the ground.

"Come now, make me your confidant, Lydia," he said, coaxingly. "I can't bring myself to believe that there really exists any barrier between us."

"There is one," she said, sadly.

"Tell me what it is, and see how quickly I'll find a way to overcome it. I am not poor, Lydia, and money removes a great many barriers in this world."

"Yes, you are rich and I am poor," she answered, plucking the leaves listlessly from a little shrub which grew by the side of the rock.

"Is that the reason?" he demanded. "Because if it is, that can be easily remedied."

"No, it is not that."

"What then?"

"Suppose that I am already married?" Lydia did not look Sinclair in the face as she put the question, but kept her eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Let me look in your eyes, Lydia," he said, quietly.

Slowly she raised her head and looked with a mournful gaze into his face.

"That is not the reason, Lydia; you are not married," he said, coaxingly.

"You think so?" she said, deeply agitated, and again she looked down upon the ground.

"I am sure of it. Come, your reason."

"Suppose that I had committed some great crime?"

"A great crime?"

"Yes, suppose that I was a murderer,

would you love me then?" Cold and unnatural was her voice.

"Oh, nonsense!" he cried, lightly; "you are only trying me, Lydia, but you shall find that my love is so strong that if you will only give yourself to me, I will take you almost without question."

"Oh, you do love me!" she exclaimed, and she raised her large eyes, now moist with tear-drops, to his face.

"Yes, I do; men say that I am an icicle, Lydia, but I sometimes fancy that I am a great deal more like a slumbering volcano," he said, smiling.

"Let us go home now," and she rose as she spoke.

The red glare of the setting sun came full upon the rocky summit and seemed to crown the head of the girl with a halo of light.

As Sinclair gazed upon her, he thought that he had never seen her look so lovely before.

Paxton sprang lightly down the rock-ledge—twice some three feet descent—and turned to offer his hand to the girl.

"I can jump," she said, and she sprang from the rock, but, as she came down, her ankle twisted under her, and with a moan, rung forth by acute pain, she sunk down in a faint upon the rocks.

Sinclair was at her side in an instant, and kneeling, raised her head from the ground and supported it upon his knee. As he did so, an ivory portrait which was suspended from her neck by a blue ribbon, slipped from its place of concealment in her bosom.

The piece of ivory lay upon Sinclair's knee, the picture in plain sight. He could not help but see it. A jealous pang shot through his heart when he saw that it was the picture of a young and handsome man.

He had little time for reflection, for 'twas but a moment before Lydia recovered her senses.

"I'm afraid that I have sprained my ankle," she said, as he raised her head, then her eyes fell upon the portrait dangling from her bosom, and a quick, hot flush came over her face.

"It came from the bosom of your dress when you fell," he said, a little constraint visible in his manner.

"You have looked at it?" she asked, leaning back against the rock.

"Yes, I could not help doing so as it lay upon my knee. Lydia, has that portrait any thing to do with this mystery which seems to surround you?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Lydia, I confess I am curious," he said, slowly. "Is that the portrait of a brother?"

"No; I never had a brother."

"Is it then the portrait of a lover—a husband?"

The girl's face flushed, but she did not reply.

"You will not answer?" he persisted.

"No."

A moment Sinclair gazed into the face of the girl.

"Lydia!" he cried, suddenly, "I will trust you, even though you do not speak. Let me help you up."

She had sprained her ankle quite badly, and could only walk with difficulty.

Sinclair half-carried her down the hill, and on reaching the level ground they paused to rest for a moment.

"Sinclair, you do not ask me to tell you whose picture this is which I carry in my bosom?" she said, leaning heavily on his arm, and looking up full into his face with her dark eyes.

"No, I do not care to know now," he replied; "my curiosity is gone. In your own good time you shall tell me all."

"I am not worthy of a love like yours," she said, earnestly; "is it not better that you should stop now? You are not yet so deeply involved that you can not retreat."

"Oh, no; I will go onward," he replied, carelessly, "and if you can be won, I'm the man that will win you."

"Tell me how I can persuade you to stop?" she asked, earnestly.

"There is only one way," he answered, gravely.

"And that is?"

"Convince me that you are really unworthy of me; that may effect a cure."

"It will be so hard for me to do that!" she responded, sadly.

"Yes, I do not doubt that," he said, smiling.

"No, no, I do not mean that!" she exclaimed, quickly, perceiving how he had misconstrued her words. "I mean that it will be so painful for me to speak the words which will surely convince you that we can never be man and wife."

"When I hear you speak, then I shall believe," he replied.

Then they walked slowly back to the village. It was quite dark when they arrived at Lydia's house. Her ankle had got much better during the walk.

The two stood together in the porch.

"Good-night," he said, and he bent down as if to kiss her cheek.

"If I let you do that, you will tell me of it at some future time." She spoke half in jest, half earnest.

"You forced me to tell you," he replied.

Slowly the cheek was raised to meet his lips.

"Good-night," she said, and passed into the house, while he departed down the street.

Lydia bound up her sprained ankle and went to bed early that night.

Before she extinguished the light, she drew the ivory miniature from its hiding-place in her bosom and kissed it again and again; and yet, when snug in bed and the light extinguished, another face floated before her eyes, a face that bore the impress of the Saco-Indian blood, and as her senses recoiled to dreamland, her lips murmured:

"Dear, dear Sinclair!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAISY AT BAY.

PROMPTLY at the time appointed, Hollis was on the spot where he had arranged to meet Mr. Daisy Brick, but that gentleman did not make his appearance, and after waiting an hour or so for him, the carpenter began to believe that he did not intend to keep the appointment when he had made it.

"Curse him!" muttered Hollis, in a rage; "I ought to have strangled him when I had my hands on his throat."

The carpenter was pretty well under the influence of liquor, and his patience was not remarkable even when sober.

His acquaintances in the town had noticed that, for a week or so, Hollis had been drinking very hard. In fact, it had become quite a novelty to see him sober.

Everybody said that Jed Hollis was going to the devil as fast as he could go, but no

one volunteered to stretch forth a hand to save him.

Hollis fumed and raved as he strode up and down, waiting for Brick to come.

Finally he lost what little patience he had.

"I'll go after him!" he cried, "the mean sneak! He'll find he can't make a fool of Jed Hollis. He's got to tell me what I want to know, and if he don't, I'll smash him, that's all."

And with this threat, he started to find Brick.

Up and down the streets of Biddeford, Hollis went, but no trace of Brick could he find.

At last the carpenter took up his stand in front of the post-office. He had worked himself up into a terrible rage. One thing only afforded him any consolation, and that was the thought of how he would demolish Brick the moment he could get his hands upon him.

Hollis saw that the slippery gentleman had tricked him, but inwardly he vowed that he would fully square the account at their next meeting.

The carpenter had inquired of two or three whom he thought likely to know something of Brick, as to his whereabouts, but the inquiry was fruitless. He could not gain any information whatever.

"Oh, won't I smash him!" he kept repeating to himself, as he cooled his rage and his heels on the post-office corner.

At last Hollis came to the conclusion that he might as well go home. The carpenter boarded with an aunt of his, just on the outskirts of the town.

The carpenter carried a good look-out about him, Hollis proceeded homeward. He had an idea, now that he had given up his search for the missing Mr. Brick, that by accident he might stumble upon him.

An accident—that wonderful helper to fortune in this life—did befriended the desperate man. At the very first corner that he turned he beheld the elegant figure of Daisy Brick, Esq., proceeding leisurely down the street.

Brick's attention was suddenly attracted by the sound of the heavy footsteps behind him. He looked around and saw his enemy.

"I've got you!" the carpenter cried, in triumph.

But Hollis "gave tongue" too soon.

Brick was some twenty paces from him, and the moment he recognized the carpenter and heard his meaning shout, he took to his heels and ran like a grayhound.

"Stop, you fool!" cried Hollis, in a rage. He felt perfectly sure of overtaking Brick, and was annoyed that the fugitive should put him to the trouble of running after him.

The carpenter was noted among the young fellows of the town for his skill in many sports, and rather prided himself upon his fleetness of foot.

But Jed Hollis of twenty-eight, and Jed Hollis of twenty-one, were two very different persons. The carpenter had been a hard drinker for the past three or four years, and continued struggles with "John Barleycorn" don't improve a man's wind, and do impair his stamina.

Away went Brick, and away went Hollis after him.

The wonderful foot-race through the quiet streets of Biddeford would have undoubtedly attracted a great deal of attention, but as it was late—past ten—nearly all of the good people had gone to bed.

To his utter astonishment, after chasing Brick for a short time, Hollis discovered that he was losing ground. He groaned in rage, and dashed on at his utmost strength; but there again, Jed Hollis, full of liquor, was not Jed Hollis quite sober, and Brick, whose fear lent wings to his heels, and who never once looked behind him, soon left his angry pursuer far behind.

Around a corner went Brick, and when Hollis reached and turned the corner, he could not even hear the sound of the fugitive's flying footsteps.

Hollis, out of breath, and chock-full of rage, halted on the corner for a few moments, and relieved his mind by cursing Brick, up hill and down, as the saying is. Then a bright idea flashed into his muddled brain.

Might not Brick be hiding somewhere along the street?

If so, that would account for the sound of his footsteps ceasing, for that he had been able to run clear out of hearing, the enraged man could not believe. So he slowly went up one side of the street and down the other. He peered over all the fences and into all the gardens, but he was not destined to be successful at this game of hide and seek. Trace of Brick he could not find. So he halted again on the corner, and amused himself by swearing at the man who had proved himself to be the better runner.

And after this little episode, Hollis again turned his steps homeward. He had reluctantly come to the conclusion that he was not to have an interview with Mr. Daisy Brick that night. But the chapter of accidents was in the carpenter's favor.

He had turned back—for the chase had led him away a little from his direct road homeward—and was proceeding by the shortest way to his abode, when, as he turned the corner of a street, he came face to face with Brick.

That worthy gentleman had, in reality, completely run away from the carpenter, and after going two or three blocks, had made a *detour* to get back to the center of the town again, never dreaming that there was any danger of meeting the man whom he was so desirous of avoiding.

The surprise, as the two came face to face, was mutual. The place of meeting was unshaded by trees and the moonbeams made it almost as light as day.

"Aha!" cried Hollis, in joy, springing forward to seize Brick; but Daisy was no less quick than the carpenter. He gave a bound out into the middle of the street and as Hollis came after him, drew a revolver from his pocket and leveled it full at his enemy.

The carpenter paused, glancing upon Brick with eyes full of rage, but, angry as he was, he did not rush upon the little shining barrel leveled at his heart.

"Keep off!" cried Brick, in a tone which showed that he did not consider the affair to be a joking matter; "keep off!" he repeated, "or I'll put a ball right through you!"

"Oh, you will, will you?" growled Hollis, almost beside himself with rage.

"I'm in earnest now; just keep your hands off me, or you'll get hurt!"

"Why didn't you keep your appointment?"

"I never intended to," Brick replied, defiantly. "I don't relish appointments with madmen."

"I'm not mad."

"Well, you're drunk; it's all the same."

"Ain't you going to tell me the secret about this girl?"

"I'll see you in the bottomless pit first!" Brick replied, without an instant's hesitation.

"I've got the hundred dollars for you," Hollis said, changing his tone to one of entreaty.

"Look here, my friend; you think if you get this secret, that, by the use of it, you can compel Lydia Grame to marry you?" Brick asked.

"Yes, that is what I want," Hollis replied, eagerly.

"Well, if you knew it, it wouldn't help you a bit. You would be just as far away from any chance of marrying her as before."

"I know you're lying!" Hollis cried, sullenly.

"You lie when you say so!" Brick cried.

"What?" and the carpenter made a motion as if to advance upon Brick, but the latter quickly retreated a few steps and the glitter of his eyes told of danger.

"You'll get it now, first thing you know!" he cried, angrily.

"I was a fool that I let you go when I had you down by the quarry!" Hollis said, menacingly.

"You won't catch me a second time, that way," Brick replied. "The moment I got back to the town I invested in this revolver, so as to be prepared for you."

"I'll fix you yet!" the carpenter said, and he set his teeth firmly together.

"I give you fair warning that, if you attack me, I'll shoot you down just the same as I would a mad-dog. I don't propose to fool with any such man as you are."

"You won't tell me the secret about this girl, then?" Hollis said, slowly.

"No, not much!" Brick replied, defiantly.

"I'll find it out yet, and I'll get even with you, too, see if I don't!" and with this parting salutation, Hollis turned his back upon Brick and walked away.

Daisy watched him for a moment and then went on his course, keeping a careful look-out behind him lest the enraged man should take him by surprise.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DADDY EMBDEN SEEKS COUNSEL.

PELEG EMBDEN had been in ill health for some little time. He was nervous and fretful, started at shadows, and the mere jarring of a door or window was quite sufficient to throw him into a fever. To Delia's suggestions of a doctor, the old man would shiver and rather crossly intimate that there wasn't any thing the matter with him.

But the clear-sighted Delia knew better. The old man was growing thinner and thinner each day. It was plainly evident that some secret care was weighing upon his mind. Peleg Embden, the millionaire, was not the man that Skipper Embden, of the good schooner Nancy Jane, had been.

The moment that night came on the old man would sit down before the window and gaze out into the darkness.

Delia, who watched him closely, could hear him muttering commands as though once more on the deck of the coasting schooner. Then he would imagine that he saw a light swinging in the darkness, a signal, and give instructions to have it answered; speak of the turn of the tide and work himself up into a fever of anxiety. Then he would cry, "There goes the rocket; Heaven have mercy on his soul!" and shiver and shake as though stricken with an acute fit. Just at this point the daughter would interfere, get the old man away from the window and set him down by the table. And the moment the curtain was drawn down and the darkness shut out, he would become himself again.

Delia noticed that these strange fancies never attacked her father in the daytime; it was only at night, gazing out into the darkness, that he would speak of the schooner. But, sometimes, during the day, he would give way to odd fancies, and put such strange questions that Delia trembled for her father's reason. But, as a general thing, he seemed sane enough; so the daughter kept her fears to herself.

On Monday evening, just after supper, the old gentleman announced his intention of calling upon Mr. Paxton.

But when Delia saw her father take his cane and hat, she saw that he intended to walk, and it alarmed her.

"You are not going out to walk, father?" she said, in remonstrance.

"Yes, of course," he answered; "maybe it will do me good to go over the river."

"But you had better have Nathan and the carriage!" she exclaimed.

"No, no, I don't want him. I allers used to walk—and maybe I'll have to ag'in, one of these days," he added, half to himself.

"But can't he drive over and bring you home? It's a long way, father, and it will be dark."

"Dark—yes; he can come after me," he said, slowly, the words did seem to make a great impression upon him.

"What time shall he come, father?"

"Bout nine," he answered. "I want to have a good long talk with the deacon. The deacon's a smart man, and I want his advice."

Then the old sailor set out. He walked slowly and, apparently absorbed in thought. His peaked and colorless face was strangely gloomy, and many of his acquaintances, whom he passed as he went down the main street, noticed his abstraction, and "cute folks afterward" guessed that old Daddy Embden was breaking up.

But the old man looked neither to the right nor left, but kept straight on over the bridge and up through Saco, till at last he came to the deacon's house.

Paxton was busy with his newspaper, as was usual with him at that hour of the evening, so the visitor was conducted up into the library.

"Good-evening, Mr. Embden," the deacon said, rising to greet the old captain; "take a chair."

Paxton laid aside his newspaper and prepared to hear what Embden had to say. He guessed at once that his visitor had come on business, for there was very little social intimacy between the genial, broad-minded deacon and the unsocial, close-fisted Embden, who, since his return to Biddeford, had seemed to have but two ideas: the first, to make money; the second, to let people know that he had it.

Deacon Paxton had been reared in a different school altogether from that of the coasting skipper. Born to wealth, he regarded it as a servant, not

the kind hostess had sent up to her, drew a chair to the window, and was looking dreamily out upon the scene, that was so different from the fairy visions around her country home.

Not now the heraldic songs of birds and dewy perfumes of the flowers; but the whir and scurry of business, and heavy, gloomy atmospheres. Not now the beautiful landscape, with ripening fields, the velvet grass, for the cool shadow of verdurous trees; but houses, houses in endless number, smoking chimneys, cramped streets, with their hurrying throngs, and a constant murmuring of noisy airs—all changed, save the still bright blue of the sky, and the play of the sunbeams.

Yet, even this monotony, with its adieu to scenes that were full of grandeur and attractiveness, was soothing in its way.

She felt as if she would wish to be buried forever there, in that silent room, and live out her unhappy life in exile.

Hugh was not in her thoughts then, as she listlessly noted the people below, but she was thinking of her father—how she could let him know of her whereabouts?—wondering whether he had found the note explanatory of her absence?—and if he was much worried?

"I can not go back there," she uttered, half-aloud; "it has cost me too great an effort to leave it—and it would make me feel worse. I am safe, almost, now, from everybody. I can not go back. But I must know where I am. He will go to aunt Jane's, and when he finds out that she has gone away, and that I could not have seen her, then he will be very anxious about me. I know. How shall I send him word? What shall I do?"

Some one tapped gently on her door.

"Come," said Zella.

It was the landlady—a good-natured female of middle age, with an agreeable countenance.

"Good-morning, Miss," as she advanced, into the room.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Diggs."

"I just thought I'd come up and see if there's anything else you'd like to have, Miss. My boarders're all gone out, and—myho!—it's a relief to me, you know, for there's just some of the liveliest young larks here you ever did see, and they sometimes nigh tease me half out of my wits. But, is there anything else I can send up to you?"

"No, I thank you, Mrs. Diggs; I had a very nice breakfast."

"Yes, Miss."

She lingered closer, evidently having something to say, and as evidently reluctant to say it.

"Won't you sit down, Mrs. Diggs?"

"Me?—no, indeed; bless you! I haven't a minute. I've to look after the sweeping and dusting, and things generally—and hired girls need a heap of watching, you know, or they'll burn the cakes, or break the dishes, or sweep the dust under the bed—indeed they will—and—"

"But, you can sit down a little while; I—I feel as if I wanted somebody to talk to, very much. I was thinking, when you came in—and my thoughts were quite uncheerful."

"Well, I can't stop long, now," seating herself in a chair near her new boarder. "So, you were thinking, eh? Well, I used to do somewhat of it when I was young, like you, but—myhums!—I've been married, you know, and I haven't had much time for poetry since, I tell you, no, indeed!"

"Do you think, then, that dream-thoughts vanish when one gets married?" inquired Zella, very lowly.

"Well, rather," replied Mrs. Diggs, with something between a chuckle and a laugh, while she nodded her head wisely.

"And do you think people are unhappy when they get married?" still lower.

"Well, now, I can't say, generally, as to that. Was you ever married, Miss?"

"No," said Zella, quickly, and starting at the abrupt question.

"Um! well, you see, I didn't know but what I might, perhaps, hurt your feelings, and that's why I asked. I can tell you one thing, though, Miss; there's mighty few happy married people nowadays—mighty few. And I wouldn't advise a young girl to be in a hurry about loving any young fellow overmuch, now."

There was a mutual silence.

Then Mrs. Diggs said, with an effort:

"You see, Miss, my husband kind of set me going in this business, and—poor soul!—when he died, just two months past, he made me promise to adopt a rule in conducting this boarding-house. It's a good rule, if it isn't always convenient. But, then, people who don't have rules, you know, have a hard time to get along—"

"What is the rule? Does it apply to your boarders?" asked Zella.

"Yes, Miss—"

"Then, I'm sure I'll comply. What is it?"

"Well," explained Mrs. Diggs, and she did it slowly, "it's always customary with me to request—mind, I only say, to request—that all my boarders pay me in advance, you see; and if it's convenient—"

"Why, certainly," Zella smiled as she drew forth her purse.

"Now, mind, Miss, I say if it's entirely convenient."

"Of course—as well now as any other time, I guess. What are your terms, Mrs. Diggs?"

"How long are you going to stay?"

Zella did not answer immediately, for it had never occurred to her how long she would remain there. The accommodations suited her; the house was very genteel, but the questions of time and means had never suggested themselves.

While she hesitated, she was running over the contents of her purse; then her face became more pale, for, contrary to her expectations, the sum she possessed was small—only eleven dollars.

"How much per week, Mrs. Diggs?"

"I—I hardly know—very likely."

"Well, you see, my house is one of the best—nothing but what's first-class about it. My terms are a dollar a day to men boarders; but I guess you can stop for five dollars a week—that includes washing, you know."

The latter remark reminded Zella that she had not even brought a change of clothing with her. To remedy this condition would require money at once, so that she must husband her resources.

She paid for one week's board in advance.

Then the two entered into conversation, which—though Mrs. Diggs had declared she could not stop a minute—consumed nearly the whole forenoon.

The sun was high its meridian when the landlady withdrew, and as she passed along the hall, she was saying to herself:

"My! my! what a sad little thing she is; just as pretty as an angel, and as solemn as if she'd lost every friend in the world. And I couldn't find out for the life of me who she is, or where she comes from! I'll fix it nice and comfortable for her, sure, for I like her. I do wonder what makes her so sad like."

Mrs. Diggs could not have dreamed how, only a few hours distant in the past, that lovely girl had been the very soul of gaiety, with laughing lips, merry eyes, and a heart of gold brimful of hope.

Zella remained at the window, and again busied her mind with trying to devise some plan for apprising her father of her whereabouts.

While this was perplexing her, a barouche turned the corner above, and sped along through the street below her. A liveried driver guided the spirited horses. A beautiful girl and a well-dressed gentleman occupied the back seat.

Involuntarily she took the gay equipage into her latest gaze.

No sooner did she see the face of him who sat beside the young girl, than her eyes widened—the white cheeks grew whiter—she started up, and reached her two clasped hands out of the window toward him.

"Oh! Hugh—Hugh!" she cried, "come to me! I am here, Hugh! Come back! come back!"

But the cry was buried in the busy hum and rattle of the wagon-wheels, and the barouche swept on.

She stood there, with her hands still clasped pleadingly, and the dark eyes wide and straining as they looked after him.

Then he was lost to view; she sunk back into the chair, her whole form trembling, and the pale face, so full of woe, drooped forward on her arm on the window-sill.

"O—h! Hugh—Hugh! I hoped never to see you again. I had hoped I could forget you—forget that I ever loved you so madly! But Heaven is unkind—oh! so unkind, to send you to my eyes this way! Why, why did you drive east that day? Why, why did you and I ever come together? I feel as if I—could—die! My heart is breaking!"

As the barouche drove swiftly before the house, a man on the opposite side of the street halted suddenly in his rapid walk, and stared at the beautiful girl who sat beside Hugh Winfield.

He elevated his nose, adjusted the green glasses, frowned, and muttered: "Now, bless my spectacles! if that female had dark hair instead of flaxen, I'd swear it was Zella Kearn. What a resemblance there is, to be sure!—and—ah! eh? why?"

"Well, now?"

He glanced up, accidentally, at the third story window directly opposite, and beheld the pale, beseeching, tearful face that looked so yearningly after Hugh Winfield.

This time, there could be no mistake; and while he wondered, he exclaimed: "There's Zella Kearn, or I'll forfeit my diploma! What she's doing there?"

CHAPTER XIV.

FALSE?—OR FICKLE?

"From lips like those, what precepts failed to move?"

"Away, away, my early dream. Remembrance never must awake."—BYRON.

A large, square-built house, with brown-stone steps, an arched doorway, and windows finished in a corresponding color.

The interior was one of unsurpassed richness—gilt and drapings, mirrors that reflected the gaudy colors of rare carpeting and fanciful ceilings, pruned chandeliers, furniture of satin fringe—everything to speak of wealth and taste set forth in the spacious halls and arched parlors. It was the home of Idle Wyn, she whose love Hugh Winfield was to reciprocate, and whose money was the object of that reciprocation.

The house was early evening. Lights burned brilliantly in parlor and bedrooms.

In an apartment in the second story, Idle Wyn reclined on a long, high cushion of costly fabric—a picture of loveliness at ease upon a couch of dreamful luxury.

To describe her, we have but to imagine a counterpart of Zella Kearn. The two were of the same symmetry of form, the same unearthly beauty of face—even in voice there was a likeness. The exceptions were that Idle was about two years younger—the difference in age not perceptible; her hair was soft and flaxen; her speech was, perhaps, richer with melody, and her manner was more studied, as if her chiefest grace was a cultivation of power.

She was attired in a way to discover all those charms a woman may display with propriety. Her long tresses volumed over shoulders of statue-like purity, and in them mingled the many jewels on her person, like diadems of splendor in a golden mist.

For a long time she had been reading a novel—not attentively, but in a way that indicated a realness of spirit, and betrayed that it was but an occupation to pass the slow moments.

Soon she started up from the cushion, and impatiently tossed the book aside.

"There's no recreation for me in that! Why don't he come? surely, it is time."

And the daintily slipped feet began to tread and fro on the yielding carpet.

"So, he is coming at last!" she broke forth, meditatively, while a smile that was sweet even in its expression of triumph, wreathed her lips.

"At last he will be with me—and alone—the man I am worshipping, and to gain whose love, I could almost be guilty of the most heinous of crimes! Oh! how I love him! Can I succeed?—Will he yield?"

"Will he love as I love—is he heart-free? It is strange that I should have conceived so great a passion for a man with whom I have never exchanged a word. But the hour is here! Father and son both hate me, because of what rumor has said—a rumor half true. He! but what of it? Yet, the smoother that hate to save themselves from ruin. Well, be it so; let them take my money—all of it—every cent. It is nothing to lose if I win the love I seek. Yes, take it, Cyrus Winfield—but give me the price of my sacrifice. Take all I have, but give me in return Hugh's love—ah!"

The clang of the door-bell, the sound of feet hastening to answer the summons.

Idle listened eagerly. The smile on her face deepened with its combined expressions of pleasure and prospective triumph.

The corner was Hugh Winfield.

He was ushered into her presence, and formality was at once set aside by her cordial greeting.

"Mr. Winfield, I am very, very glad to see you."

She advanced with both hands outstretched, and he took them almost involuntarily

in his own, while he gazed into the beautiful face.

Her resemblance to Zella at once struck him—and her eyes—those large, insatiable orbs, brilliant as two starry gems—seemed to hold him spellbound.

"Miss Wyn," was all he said, scarcely bowing over the warm white hands he clasped.

"I ought to feel honored by this call, Mr. Winfield," continued the beauty, smiling. "It is the first visit I have received from any one in 'society.'"

The remark slightly embarrassed him; the blood began to mount in his face. But, she immediately relieved him with:

"Come—do not let us be new acquaintances, but old friends at once. You see there are no chairs in this room, but cushions—sit on this one, beside me. They are admirable for *tele-phones*."

She led him to the cushion, on which she had been reclining a few moments previous.

He was watching her fixedly still. Those bright eyes were strangely familiar to him, they contained a something that reminded him of a past impression.

"The outside world does not think well of Ida Wyn—does it, Mr. Winfield?"

"The world is not always just in its opinions," he answered. "Moreover, it's far from being consistent. One moment it reviles, and the next it is lauding. It cultivates slander and praise, alternately, and is as often wrong in one as in the other. Communities, like the grass of the wilderness, are full of snakes, and vile tongues do not lack supporters."

"And you, Mr. Winfield—do I look like one who deserves all the ill that has been said against me?"

"Rumor gets no encouragement from me, Miss Wyn."

"I have been a victim to some of the most slanderous gossip ever invented," said Idle, with a tinge of sadness in her voice. "Surely, I never learned anybody—that I should merit their abuse. Why, it is that people will not extend to me their friendship, I do not know. For once, I have proved the inadequacy of wealth alone."

"And do you grieve much?"

"I can not help feeling that my life is an incomplete existence."

"Luxury, then, lacks perfection?"

"It does, Mr. Winfield—it does. Were I a man, I would not care. I could go out among men, and force, at least, that courtesy which men exercise toward the superiority of another in financial circles. Even such a recognition would be a relief. But I am a helpless girl, as it were, with no strong arm to protect, no counselor to turn to, no companion to—why, I never knew the love of an honest friend; then can you wonder that I sometimes feel lonely, sometimes almost wish I never had been born?"

There were two great influences already beginning to work within him: the girl's beauty of face and form was not without its effect; her resemblance to Zella, while it could but recall to his mind the man he had won and cast away, served, in a way, to draw him toward her, until he found himself seized with an admiration akin to love.

As he listened to her rich, bird-like voice, too, with its soft protestations against the treatment she received at the hands of "society," he felt that she was a victim to the malicious envy of belated attractiveness than she—and that "society" was but a name, with better, truer, lovelier women outside the cramped boundaries of its stilted limit, than ever reigned within.

An hour passed. Their conversation had been full of life, and the ardor of his increasing depth of feeling.

It was not, to him, as if the acquaintance had been but recently formed; it seemed that he must have known her for years, and had, until this moment, withstood her charms.

She had watched him closely throughout; quick to perceive, with the keenness of an absorbing love, she saw that her triumph was approaching.

"Miss Wyn—"

"Why not call me Idle? Surely, we know each other well enough."

There was a strange magnetism in the starry orbs, for Hugh, as he returned their steady gaze, felt the blood warming in his veins, and partook of the emotion which now was causing Idle's full bosom to heave, and her sweet breath to fan upon his face, as he drew nigher.

"Yes—call me Idle."

"Idle Wyn"—the words came quick and his cheeks flushed, as the mastering fires burned fiercer and fiercer in his captive soul; "this has been a short friendship—very short. But it is not the first time that love has asserted its supremacy with overwhelming suddenness—ay, I mean it: I say love! Stop; hear me," catching the white hands and holding them in a burning clasp; "I am loving you, Idle Wyn! I am laying my heart at your feet! Will you spare me—I will love you!"

The beautiful face was glowing; the dark eyes that met his eager, pleading look, were lighted with an unearthly brilliancy.

He knew not what glad, ecstatic thrills pervaded her every nerve, as she drank in the passionate avowal; yet he could not help but see, in her face, her eyes, the whispering, wordless motion of the red, ripe lips, that there were responsive fires there, as wild, as ardent as his own, a love that needed but the murmur of the voice to make him certain.

It was her triumph!

And Zella was far, far from his thoughts then, in this new, irresistible flame which made him the very slave of her, till now, he had believed it would be impossible to even tolerate.

Ah! fickle, fickle man!

CHAPTER XV.

THE REAL APPOINTMENT.

"It strikes an awe and terror on my aching heart."—CONGREVE.

"If there be cords, or knives, Poison, or fire, or sufficing means, I'll not endure it."—SHAKESPEARE.

THOUGH Calvert Mandor's face, when he entered Onnorann's office, was stern and frowning—though his bearing and accent betrayed that he was there on no pleasant business, still the intrusion was a relief to Jiggers.

He felt that, in the presence of a third party, he was free for a time from the torments his employer was wont to practice upon him.

He bowed, he grinned, he endeavored to smoothen his standing bristles of hair—pushed forward a chair, and squirmed around in an attentive manner.

"Where is Doctor Theophilus Onnorann?"

"Yes, sir—that is, he'll be here in a moment, sir. Be seated, please," wheeling the chair closer, and bending and wriggling anew.

"Is Doctor Theophilus Onnorann out?" interrogated Mandor, seating himself.

"No, sir; he—"

"Then where is he?" an interruption so quick and sharp, that the eagle eyes gave a twitch, and Jiggers drew a short breath, as he hastened to say:

"He's just stopped into the next room. He'll be here directly—yes."

"In the next room?"

"Yes, sir; he'll be here directly—"

"Go and call him."

"Eh?"

"Call him, I say."

"If I do, may I be hanged!" exclaimed Jiggers, mentally. "He's told me never to go near that room, on penalty of being dissected. Yours truly—but I can't do any such thing, much."

Then aloud, as Onnorann appeared, with his face entirely cleared of the black stain: "Here he is now, sir."

The visitor sat with his back toward the door through which the physician entered. The latter did not observe his features, as he advanced, saying:

"Ah! good-day, sir. Glad to see you, sir. You wish to consult with me? I—h-a! God!"

Mandor had risen suddenly, and turned upon him.

After one brief glance at the man before him, Onnorann staggered backward with a sharp cry.

"Wonderful!" spouted Jiggers, as he gaped, and stared from one to the other of the two men who formed a striking tableau.

"Calvert Mandor!—alive!"

"Calvert Mandor!—alive!" echoed Jimmy. "My!"

Mandor gazed steadily into the face of the physician, who covered against the wall, and he smiled—a sneering, contemptuous, ironical smile.

"Yes, Theophilus Onnorann, I am alive. Strange, is it not?"

"The dead from the grave!" whispered Onnorann, huskily.

"From the grave! My!" echoed Jiggers, again.

"No"—advancing a step—"not from the grave, for your little plot failed. When you saw me mounted on a horse that you knew was treacherous and treacherous, you were filled with a devilish joy, no doubt, for you counted, in that ride, on my death. Your calculations were pretty near right, but I survived, you see. Nineteen years have not altered me much, eh? You knew me immediately."

During Mandor's brief, significant speech, the physician recovered from the effect of this unexpected meeting.

He was a man of nerve, and not one to be long without his composure—even in a case of this kind, where the appearance of a man he had thought dead, and on whose death he had built many plans, threatened a more than ordinary peril, and caused him a peculiar restlessness of mind.

His recovery was as sudden and complete as his surprise had been.

It must have cost him an effort few men are capable of making; for, in a second, he was calm, his voice was without a waver, he even smiled, as he rubbed his skinny hands slowly together, and said:

"I am glad, I am very glad, indeed, that you were not killed. It seems miraculous. But where have you been so long? My dear sir, you disappeared quick as a spirit down a trap-door on the stage! It's been—let me see—yes—nineteen years; quite a while. We searched for you, high and low; but you'd vanished. Sit down, and tell me all about it. It's wonderful."

" Astonishing!" supplemented Jiggers, still gaping.

"James Jiggers!" threateningly.

"Yes, sir—I won't speak again, I vow," sliding away before the dark look.

"Sit down," said the physician, appropriating a chair himself, and motioning Mandor to do likewise.

The other was rather balked by Onnorann's quiet, collected carriage.

But Jiggers saw that his employer's front was merely one assumed to meet some pending crisis; more, he perceived that the frown on Mandor's brow was gathering darkness; finally, he apprehended a collision between the two men, and inched nearer to the door, that he might be able to dash out at the first physical demonstration of hostility.

And the eagle eyes turned and circled unceasingly, the small, sharp eyes in the green spectacles were glistening, scintillating, fastening themselves on the visitor; Calvert Mandor regarded the physician in silence, as if undecided how to implore that individual's nonchalance.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 143.)

"Yes, sir—that is, he'll be here in a moment, sir. Be seated, please," wheeling the chair closer, and bending and wriggling anew.

"Is Doctor Theophilus Onnorann out?" interrogated Mandor, seating himself.

"No, sir; he—"

"Then where is he?" an interruption so quick and sharp, that the eagle eyes gave a twitch, and Jiggers drew a short breath, as he hastened to say:

"He's just stopped into the next room. He'll be here directly—yes."

"In the next room?"

"Yes, sir; he'll be here directly—"

"Go and call him."

"Eh?"

"Call him, I say."

"If I do, may I be hanged!" exclaimed Jiggers, mentally. "He's told me never to go near that room, on penalty of being dissected. Yours truly—but I can't do any such thing, much."

Then aloud, as Onnorann appeared, with his face entirely cleared of the black stain: "Here he is now, sir."

The visitor sat with his back toward the door through which the physician entered. The latter did not observe his features, as he advanced, saying:

"Ah! good-day, sir. Glad to see you, sir. You wish to consult with me? I—h-a! God!"

Mandor had risen suddenly, and turned upon him.

After one brief glance at the man before him, Onnorann staggered backward with a sharp cry.

"Wonderful!" spouted Jiggers, as he gaped, and stared from one to the other of the two men who formed a striking tableau.

"Calvert Mandor!—alive!"

"Calvert Mandor!—alive!" echoed Jimmy. "My!"

Mandor gazed steadily into the face of the physician, who covered against the wall, and he smiled—a sneering, contemptuous, ironical smile.

"Yes, Theophilus Onnorann, I am alive. Strange, is it not?"

"The dead from the grave!" whispered Onnorann, huskily.

BY A MONEY-CHANGER'S WINDOW.

A Broadway Incident.

BY LAUNCE PONTZ.

By a money-changer's window stood a poor girl in a niche.
Deaf to the sound of passing feet,
Gazing and dreaming a vision sweet,
If she were only rich!

Alone in the crowd of Broadway, the weather bitterly cold,
Only a sheet of plate-glass clear
Fenced in the wealth that looked so near,
Crisp notes and shining gold.

Close to the great bank portal, where, all the livelong day,
People were hurrying past without end,
Carrying money to hoard or spend,
She stood by the passageway—

Dreaming of what she might do, wistfully eyeing the gold;
Then, in a moment, she thought of the way
Weary and long she must go that day,
Shivering, hungry and cold.

All in a moment remembered wishing would buy no bread,
A wait cast up by the city's stream,
She bitterly sighed, "Twas only a dream,
Would God we all were dead!"

"Up in our garret mother sews for a pittance small,
Brother and I must work together,
And of our money must make good weather,
Keeping the house for all.

"At nights we strive to slumber, hunger and cold to forget,
Stinted of food from day to day,
Fearing tomorrow, and waiting for pay,
Pay that is held back yet!"

"Oh, for a warm, bright fire! Oh, for one cheerful meal!
Shoes to cover the little bare feet,
That patter over the frozen street,
Never more cold to feel.

"Think of how little we need to live, how hard it is to bear,
That others should leave such sums to lie,
When every coin would be a blessing buy,
And lighten a load of care!

"Oh, 'tis well for the poor life's short, 'tis well there's a promise given!
For charity grows very small,
That the only hope we've left at all,
Is of rest at last in heaven."

She turned from the tempting window, she gave one lingering sigh,
Then off to toil for a scanty dole,
God send her one kind, pitying soul
In the holy Christmas night!

How She Went Home.
A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

A wild, bitter night of wind and storm. The snow beat in fitful gusts against the windows of the old church, through which the light shone in a soft radiance, a little way out into the night. The wind whirled and eddied among the leafless trees, and sighed about the steeple where the bell hung, wailing silently for the ringer's hand on Christmas morning.

Within all was gayety and gladness. Young men and women were busy fashioning long sprigs of pine and sprays of feathery hemlock into crosses, and wreaths, and trailing festoons, along the arches and the galleries, and across the glittering organ-pipes. Now and then they braided in a cluster of scarlet hollyberries, or white dogwood, to relieve the somberness of the evergreens; and I think, as their hands met in weaving the Christmas garlands, some sweet hopes and fancies were woven into their lives, to brighten them up, not for a brief Christmas-time only, but for all time.

A young man and a young woman were sitting on the chance-steps, with a heap of odorous pine and gleaming berries of the scarlet holly before them, from which they were deftly weaving a motto for the arch above the altar. He formed the tassels of the pine into long braids, and she sewed them upon a background of white, putting in, here and there, an illumination from the holly heap before her.

She had a sweet, pure face. It was not beautiful, perhaps, but it was something better—it was brave, and true, and womanly. The light from the altar-lamp fell over her yellow hair, and made it gleam like gold. Once, when she lifted her eyes to the arch above them, Cyril Dane thought of pictures he had seen of the Madonna.

Cyril Dane's face was fair enough, but it lacked the purity of Agnes Casilear's. Looking in it, you would have surmised that his life had not always been so full of good impulses as on this Christmas Eve, when love was stirring his soul to new depths of tenderness, and making him resolve to be a better man in future, for the sake of the woman he loved, than he had been in the past for his own sake.

That Agnes Casilear loved him you could have told by her shy glance, and the soft, glad light of peace which brooded in her face. She loved him, and the old world seemed far off; her new world was full of rest and deep content.

Letter by letter the legend grew beneath their fingers:

"Peace on Earth: Good-will to Men."
Close by one of the windows a woman shivered in the storm. A woman clad in thin and draggled garments, with a wild, wan, woful look upon her face, as the light streamed out upon it through the narrow panes—a look pitiful to see on this Christmas night, or on any night. Her long hair streamed about her face, in the fierce fury of the wind, and she shuddered and caught her breath with a quick gasp, as a fresh gust tore around the corner of the church, and eddied the white snow into her blinded eyes.

She pressed her faded face to the panes, and looked in. She saw the wreaths grow into shape and beauty beneath swift and nimble fingers, and crosses and festoons fashioned by skillful hands, from the odorous heaps of greenery. By and by, her eyes wandered away toward the altar, and she saw the two sitting there together, at work on the grand old legend of the birth-night of our Savior, sung hundreds of years ago on the Judean plains, when angels told the world of the great gladness which the night had brought to them.

The woman started when she saw the man's face, and pressed her hand upon her heart, as if to still its tumult.

"Peace on Earth," she read, "As if there could be such a thing as peace!" she cried, bitterly, her eyes full of pitiful wildness. "It's always peace! peace! that they preach to us; but there's no peace! If there is, I have not found it, and I never shall! Perhaps I don't deserve it. I don't know what ails me to-night. I feel just like getting away somewhere by myself, in the night and the storm, and loading myself to death. I wonder if it's because it's Christmas night? I used to be glad when Christmas came, but now it doesn't make any difference to me what the night or the day

is. They're all alike, all alike! I wonder if it isn't better to be dead, when one gets to hate herself?"

She put her face to the pane again, and drew her thin covering closer about her shoulders.

"He doesn't seem to think of bitter things," she said, with cold lips. "He has n't any ugly memories to trouble him. Men never have! It's only us women! I dare say he doesn't think of any one but that girl at his side. By his looks I judge he thinks there is but one woman in the world, and she is his. I wonder how long he will care for her? A month, probably; two or three of them, like enough; then a prettier face comes along, and good-by to the old one! Oh, dear, dear! It's a bitter world! A bitter, cruel, cold world! I've known hearts that were colder than this storm is, though!"

The young man wore in the last tassel of pine, and the young woman fastened in the last cluster of hollyberries, and the motto was complete. The woman outside, looking in, saw him bend down suddenly, and kiss her. A warm wave of color surged over the fair face, and the clear, pure eyes wavered, and hid themselves shyly beneath their long lashes; then lifted themselves suddenly to his face in a look of perfect trust, and a woman's unquestioning love and confidence.

"She has got a sweet face," muttered the woman, "and she lets it tell how much she loves him. I'm sorry, sorry, for he isn't worthy a pure woman's love. It's a queer world, isn't it?" she asked, suddenly, of some invisible companion—some sprite of the storm, like enough—"an awful queer world! That man has kissed me, and told me that he loved me—me, a poor creature that a pure woman, like that one in there, wouldn't touch for fear of contamination, and yet she loves him. Her soul's white as this snow is, I know, and his soul has got stains on it, but she can't see them. If she could, maybe she wouldn't be afraid of their staining her soul, because she loves

him so. Love's a queer thing. This world is full of queer things. I can't understand it, somehow."

This poor creature, who couldn't understand the world, looked in again through the window. They were getting ready to fasten the motto in its place above the altar. The woman with the white soul had disappeared.

"Perhaps he wasn't so much to blame for what happened as I was, after all," the woman went on, in a slow, drowsy way. "I hadn't any right to expect that he would care for a poor, miserable creature like me, after a little. I haven't any right to love! I oughtn't to think of such a thing, but I did hope he'd care for me, and give me a home. I might have known better. I wonder how you could have been fool enough to think of such a thing, Jane Brent?"

She shivered again, and caught her breath in a gasping way, as if the wind strangled her.

A form came around the corner of the church, and ran against the woman at the window, before either of them was aware of the other's presence.

"Who are you?" cried the woman, suddenly, turning about, and facing the other.

"I wasn't aware that any one was here," was the reply. "I was going out to my mother's grave, just at the corner of the yard there, to put this little bunch of pine and hollyberries on it, that she might know we keep her memory green, and the storm blinded me."

"It's you, is it?" the other asked, hoarsely. "I've been watching you through the window. I saw him kiss you. You love him, don't you?"

In the light coming faintly through the frosty panes the woman who asked the question could see a soft light steal into the woman's face, making it tender and sweet.

"Yes, I love him," she answered, as if to herself. "Dear Cyril!" Then, as she suddenly recollected herself, she added: "Don't mind me, please. I'm so happy to-night that I don't know just what I'm saying. I think you look cold. Are you?"

"I'm not very warm," the woman answered. "But it don't make much difference. Nobody cares for me!"

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin. Oh, dear! dear!" breaking down suddenly in a bitter burst of weeping.

"Don't help you?" said the other, pleadingly. "I would be so glad to, if I could."

"No, no!" cried the sobbing woman. "I wish you could, but you can't. I'm past help. I'm thankful for your kindness, all the same. You're an angel. If some one like you had spoken to me years ago as you have to-night I might have been a different woman. But it's too late now. Hark! they're calling you."

"I'm so sorry I can't help you," the young woman said. "But, if I can't, God can. You are shivering with cold. Take this shawl. I have another inside, and the sleighs will take us home so quickly that I shall not dream of being cold. I wish I could help you!" longingly.

"But you can't," was the reply, as the woman drew the soft folds of the shawl closer about her shivering form.

"Oh, but somebody must!" the other cried. "I don't believe there is anybody in the world that *somebody* doesn't care for!"

"You don't know!" cried the woman at the window. "You ain't used to the world, and I am. You think, because you're so happy, everybody else ought to be. But they ain't. I wish I was dead!"

"Don't talk so, please," the other said, shivering at the idea. "Are you in trouble? Perhaps I can help you. Let me try."

"Go away!" cried the woman. "Don't touch me! You don't know what a sinful thing I am. Women, not half so good and pure as you are, go by on the other side, for fear of soiling themselves by touching me with their garments. You shrink! I thought you would, when you knew what you were talking to."

"You are a woman," was the answer, in a tone of infinite pity. "Let me help you if I can. Trust me, please."

She put her hand gently on the woman's arm.

"Are you an angel?" asked the poor creature, in an awed voice. "You ain't afraid to touch me, for all I'm so soiled with sin.